

Commercialization or Moralization in Fandom? Understanding the  
Organizational Dynamics and Roles of Hong Kong Fan Clubs



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## Abstract

This study seeks to examine the roles and functions of artiste-based fan clubs in the local fandom or fan culture. Based on the participant observations and in-depth interviews in three local fan clubs, the study has revealed the functional operations and the possible socialization processes in the fan clubs in Hong Kong. From an organizational perspective, the study conceptualizes fans clubs as organizations dotting along a “commercialization-moralization continuum”. In general, three kinds of fans club are investigated and discovered: from a purely commercial form, a normative form upholding morality to a hybrid type of the aforementioned ones. Fan clubs exhibiting a major commercial role are those serving both as an agent for promoting the artists concerned and as a target of the commercial company for actively consuming the products of the artistes. Fan clubs playing a prominent role in moralization are those turning artistes’ personal principles, beliefs and behaviors into moral values and incorporating them into the clubs’ operations, and subsequently, these values are practiced by the club members. In addition, there exist dual-purpose fan clubs which perform both the commercializing and moralizing roles actively. The difference in the major roles performed by different fan clubs can be attributed to the different values guiding or underlying the organizing parties of the affiliated fan clubs. This finding has pointed out that the “organized” fandom, in addition to supporting the specific idol, accepts, shares and performs organizational values, serving organizational interests and achieving organizational goals. As fans are performing according to organizational values, interests and goals, the socialization process is also seen to be working in the organized fandom. The organizational values and fans’ performances further reflect the dominant values, beliefs and behaviors in society, and the developments of fan clubs and changes in fans’ actions, taken collectively but not individually, can manifest the social conditions, trends and changes at large. From an organizational perspective taking into account the interplay and compatibility between the fan club at the managerial level and the participating members at the operational level, the study provides a new or supplementary theoretical approach in addition to the traditional perspectives which view fandom as individual or group behaviors, or identity formation among the fans or within the fan clubs. The study has probed into the functional roles played by the fans and the fan clubs, in opposition to the commonplace and negative delineations of fans as lacking self-confidence and seeking attachments to celebrities or of fan clubs as dysfunctional groups causing disturbances to society. The possible socialization processes taking place in fan clubs, as suggested by the study, can be further explored for a better understanding of the formation of youth culture.



## 論文大綱

本研究試圖從機構的角度出發，探討以偶像歌星為中心的歌迷會在本地的歌迷文化中所扮演的角色。總括來說，根據在三個本地歌迷會中所作的參與觀察和深入訪問的資料分析顯示，本地的歌迷會主要可分為三類：商業類、道德說教類及混合類。商業化的歌迷會，透過努力宣傳偶像歌星和購買其推銷的商品，積極推動商業化的進程。另一方面，道德說教的歌迷會將偶像歌星的個人宗旨、信念及行為轉化或提升為一些道德價值或準則，並把這些道德價值或準則納為營運的方針和指引，而會員亦會在歌迷會的活動或日常的生活中實踐這些價值或準則。此外，在商業類與道德說教類之間，存在一種混合性歌迷會，它同時展現商業化和道德說教的雙重功能。研究發現，歌迷會所表現的功能主要取決於其建立機構的文化、理念和價值。因此，除了崇拜及支持偶像外，運作於歌迷會建構中的歌迷組織，透過會內的社教過程，在很大的程度上服從機構的文化和價值，並為機構的理念和利益服務，從而達致機構的目標。再者，歌迷的表現及機構的文化和價值大致上也可反映社會上某些主流的價值觀，所以研究整體歌迷會的發展進程或可加深對社會狀況、趨勢和變化的了解。本研究將歌迷會理解為一個機構，分析管理階層和前線會員的相互作用及協調，為傳統偏重於探討個人、小組的行為表現，或身分認同的歌迷或偶像崇拜研究提供一個額外或較新穎的探究角度。此外，本研究認同歌迷的實際功用，這項發現可為一般對歌迷或歌迷會否定或貶義的描述作反証。最後，歌迷會的社教作用可以作為未來研究的一個方向，這對青少年文化的了解和形成也有幫助。

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## Chapter 1 Background

In a highly capitalized culture of Hong Kong, idolatry has become a common phenomenon under which people admire and support their idols in many different ways. Fans, as alienated individuals, usually pay special attention to the news of their idols and collect those cultural products associated with the idols. Some of the fans may also join the fan clubs and participate in the idolatrous activities collectively. Idolatry or affection for idols is not just confined to adolescents. In fact, adults may also have their adoring idols and enroll as fan club members. To name a few local cases, fan clubs of Liza Wang, Andy Lau, Leon Lai, Jacky Cheung, Teresa Teng, Priscilla Chan and Vivian Lai comprise a noticeably large number of adult fans.

Fans and their behaviors are generally negatively portrayed by the media as crazy and mindless. In the mid-1990s, a song called “Fans’ Killing in Broadcast Drive”<sup>1</sup> by the “soft-hard” of the Commercial Radio, sarcastically pointed out Hong Kong fans’ blind support for their idols. Fans depicted in the song are not only wasting their time and but also jeopardizing their lives. The lyrics indeed express a contempt, if not a condemnation, for these foolish actions of the fans.

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<sup>1</sup> An excerpt of the lyrics illustrating fans’ “misbehaviors” is provided here:  
*Every fan is holding a whistle, conquering the Coliseum and suppressing IP*  
*Keeping the gate for 24 hours, knowing every secret corridor*  
*Hardworking than PR and very punctual, present in the record company at 6:00 a.m.*  
*Writing on the wall and the floor, shattering glass if something happens*  
*Seeing idol’s car and rushing onto the road, being a good long-distance runner*  
*Jumping high, clapping hands and opening the mouth wide, lying in the middle of the road and twisting*  
*Chasing from Clear Water Bay to the tunnel, hair messed up and wet with smelly sweat*  
*With a pale face and lips and doesn’t know how to vomit, going home and resting after screaming and seeing enough*



What's more, fan-related coverage is frequently found in the entertainment section of many local newspapers where fans and fan activities are often disparagingly covered. For example, rivalry between fan clubs, fan club members' impoliteness or even hostility towards pop singers other than their respective idols, and their behaviors of chasing their idols' cars and waiting for their idols in the midnight, etc. are often reported. Notwithstanding, those who are in the majority of fans and behave themselves properly in front of their idols as well as other pop singers are given scarce attention in the media, let alone charity work performed by some of the fan clubs. While it is generally understandable that neutral and good incidents or actions are less newsworthy than "misbehaviors", the "under-representation" of these incidents might have left the public with a somewhat distorted version of fans and/or fandom in Hong Kong in general.

In recent years, fans and their idolatry have also become one of the hot social topics issues for local research. Academic institutions and social agencies have conducted various research on fan-related issues, especially among adolescents or youth. Youth in Hong Kong tend to regard artistes or idols in the entertainment industry, instead of their parents or teachers, as their role models. Some of the adolescents even think that their idols are qualified for the position of Chief Executive of Hong Kong. Such research findings have opened further discussions in society about the mentality of local youth in comparison with that of their counterparts in Mainland China where national heroes or great persons such as Sun Yat Sen and Zhou En Lai are considered role models for youth.

The contemporary Hong Kong society has witnessed the flourishing of fan clubs for

both emerging and existing artistes. The operation of a fan club mediates and complicates the relationship between the fans and the specific idol. In essence, the fan club operates like an organization, which serves both the fans and the idol by coordinating various activities and organizing special functions for the two parties to meet each other. This is unquestionably noticeable role of any fan club. However, besides the provision of fan club gatherings, are there any other specific roles underlying the operation of the fan club? In particular, are there any “meritorious” roles possibly performed by the fan club in opposition to the general derogatory perception of fans as “crazy” and of fan clubs as “dysfunctional”. In some cases, a fan club may introduce or reinforce certain “positive” specific values held by the idol and the members. These values can be derived from the interplay among the idol, the fan club and its members. The members may in turn seek to articulate these values through their involvement in the club activities. In this way, the fan club can be conceived as a “moralizing” institution for the idolatrous members, i.e. an organization where those acclaimed values and principles of the idol are incorporated into its operation, and practiced and manifested by the members in their involvement in the organization’s activities and / or even in their daily lives (this “moralizing” function and the concept of “moralization” will be discussed in details in Chapter 3 which explicates the “commercialization-moralization continuum” analytical framework of the thesis).

On other occasions, some fan clubs are established and controlled by the management companies of the idols. This implies that the operation of these fan clubs is inevitably influenced by the commercial interests of the management companies. Given that a fan club may be serving its controlling management company like a subsidiary organization, how does it contribute to the company’s

commercial or profit-making goals? Moreover, given that popularity is a social recognition for which most artists are striving, is it possible that the fan club gathers the strength of the members and galvanizes them into supporting the idol in the public or “creating a popularity momentum for the idol”? Besides the “face value”, popularity, practically, is a selling point which attracts the audiences in the general public to purchase the products associated with the artist, and above all, enhances the artist’s bargaining power with which the management company can negotiate with the existing or prospective advertisers in the favor of the artist and the company itself. Given this practical value, how are the fan club members turned into a promotional tool to create and enhance popularity of the artist in order to “sell” him or her to the public and the advertisers? If the members are used as a promotional tool, the fan club can be conceived as a commercial agent for the management company (this commercial or “commercializing” function will be further explained in the “commercialization-moralization continuum” framework in Chapter 3). The possible “pressure” from the management company does complicate the relationship between the fans and the idol under the operation of the fan club.

Different fan clubs may have varying degrees of emphasis on these commercializing and moralizing functions. Fandom, under the system or operation of the fan club, can provide a distinctive context and site for the study of the phenomenon of fan culture. With fan clubs as the unit of analysis, and by means of participant observation in the fan club activities and interviews with fan club members, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How do fan club members articulate their goals and interests in the fan club? How do they interpret fan club activities and deal with the fan club’s possible “control”? How do they perceive their own roles in the fan club?



2. What are the roles of fan clubs in the Hong Kong society? What functions do they serve to the club members, the idols and management companies? Through the interaction with all these parties, how do they achieve their specific goals and perform the prescribed functions?

Approaching “artiste-based” fan clubs as organizations, this study attempts to examine their organizational dynamics in terms of their goals and roles in the construction or transformation of fandom or fan culture through the interaction and negotiation among the fans, idols and the management companies within the domain of popular culture in Hong Kong. At a societal level, this study hopes to provide a new perspective of understanding the functional or constructive roles possibly played by fans under the system or operation of a fan club in addition to or in opposition to the existing “biases” against fans and fan behaviors. For theoretical significance, the study seeks to explore fans and fandom in an organizational context where the relationship and interplay between fans and the organizing party of the fan club may be changing or modifying, influencing the practices in fan cultures. The study will serve as an additional approach to the Western perspective which tends to investigate fans and fandom in terms of psychological characteristics, rationality / irrationality and creativity, consumption and production, construction of identities within subcultures supplementing or resisting dominant discourse. It will also add substances and values to the Japanese perspective which examines fans and fandom in terms of collective values inside a fan club, thus contributing to a build-up of a more comprehensive Asian perspective for fandom theories and research. Furthermore, the results will help develop a framework on which future research can base to look into fan clubs or other relevant entities from an organizational perspective.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review and Research Methods

### Revisiting Fans and Fandom

The term “fan” has long been associated with negative connotations. Originally, fan is an abbreviation for “fanatic” which is defined as “a person who is *too* enthusiastic about something” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary). Traditional literature also used to study and discuss fans and fandom in terms of rationality from pathological to creative fans.

### Irrationality and pathology of fans

Early literature tends to approach fans and fandom from a psychological or psychoanalytical perspective, stigmatizing fans and their behaviors as socially undesirable. Jenson (1992) argues that “the literature on fandom is haunted by images of deviance” and that “the concept of fan involves images of social and psychological pathology” (p.9). He describes two specific types of these “pathological fans”. The first type is the obsessed loner, who has “an intense fantasy relationship with a celebrity figure” and is notorious for his or her “crazed” acts of “threatening or killing the celebrity” (p.11). A prominent example could be the fan who killed ex-Beatle John Lennon. The second type is the “frenzied or hysterical member of a crowd”, screaming and weeping at a music or sports star” (p.11-12).

Reviewing studies on fandom, celebrity and media influence, Jenson (1992: 18) has also found that most studies conclude that fans suffer from psychological inadequacy, and they are particularly vulnerable to media influence and crowd contagion. That is why fans have to make contact with famous stars in order to compensate for their



own inadequate lives.

However, Jenson himself opposes this notion by juxtaposing the abovementioned fans with the high culture or academic “aficionado” (fan). He argues that there is no major difference between academics obsessed with theorists and a pathological fan adoring celebrities. They are only different in that the former distinguish themselves from the “other fans” to suggest that they are more normal than the “others” (Longhurst, 1995). As Jenson puts it: “Defining fandom as a deviant activity allows (individually) a reassuring, self-aggrandizing stance to be adopted. It also supports the celebration of particular values – the rational over the emotion, the educated over the uneducated, the subdued over the passionate, the elite over the popular, the mainstream over the margin, the status over the alternative.”

### **Rationality of fans**

Besides Jenson’s critics, the works of Garratt (1984), Wise (1990), Cline (1992), Grossberg (1992) and Fiske (1992), as suggested by Longhurst (1995), challenge the idea of pathology or irrationality with the fans. These intellectuals counter-propose that fans are rational in terms of their articulation and reasoning, sensibility and authenticity, and productivity.

### *Articulation and reasoning*

Garratt (1984) explicates her fan feelings for the Bay City Rollers in the 1970s. She took part in fan activities to support the Bay City Rollers out of the “desire for comradeship” rather than her attachment to the band. She just enjoyed the talks with



other fans about the band. The reason why she chose this band but not any other is simply that women are attracted by androgyny (p.144).

Garratt (1984:147) is also aware that the fans might be a “lucrative market” for commercial exploitation. What is exploitable however is not just the records, but also the “accessory products” of the stars such as posters, tour programs, fan club specials, books, magazines, and any other products produced out of the stars’ images. Furthermore, she asserts that the fans realized that they might not be fooled by the coverage of their idols as such coverage might not be true.

In a “self-study” of her own experience as a fan of Elvis Presley, Wise (1990) reveals that she collected pictures and cuttings about Elvis and created her own space within a crowded household through her immersion in Elvis, who served as a friend of hers. Her attachment to him had nothing to do with sex or romance but with “warmth and affection” (p.395). This contrasts sharply with many males’ writing about Elvis’s “rampant male sexuality” (p.391), which was central to his appeal. Cline (1992) also criticizes the notion that women’s connection with their idols is based on sexuality or sexual desire for the idols. She maintains that “most rock fans never become groupies” (p.81) in the sense of sleeping with rock stars.

The writers mentioned above, in general, affirm the rationality of fans in their articulation of the rationale behind their idolatry and of the relationship between themselves and the idols. To take a further step, Grossberg introduces the concepts of “sensibility” and “authenticity” to acknowledge the rationality of fans and fan activities.

### *Sensibility and authenticity*

In a general account of rock music fandom, Grossberg (1992) contends that the relationship between texts and audiences is an active one and conceptualizes such a relationship as “sensibility”. Grossberg characterizes two kinds of sensibility. The first one is the “sensibility of the consumer” that “operates by producing structures of pleasure” (p.55). This is fans’ normal use of popular music to obtain the pleasure of entertainment. The second one is the sensibility that is engaged in by fans whose “relation to cultural texts operates in the domain of affect or mood”, which can help distinguish fans from others. He argues that “affect is not the same as either emotions or desires” but “is closely tied to what we often describe as the feeling of life” (p.56). He adds that affects help people to live in contemporary societies through the construction of their identities which separate themselves from others. Therefore, fans’ affects for a particular star or a certain kind of music may structure their identities. For instance, rock provides the fan with “a place where he or she can locate some sense of his or her own identity and power, where he or she can invest his or her self in specific ways” (p.61).

Grossberg also puts forward the concept of authenticity through which rock fans explain their commitment to particular forms of music. In Longhurst’s words (1995), one of the ways in which authenticity works is that ‘the fan may argue that a particular performer expresses his or her feelings and those of others which bind them together to form a community of those who recognize the profundity of the performer’s music’ (p.234). Thus, Longhurst concludes that Grossberg has shed light on “how certain forms of music matter to us through the production of affects and how we legitimate the affects through argument” (p.234).

While Grossberg proposes the concept of “sensibility” to explain the active relationship between texts and audiences, and the construction of self-identities for differentiation between the fans themselves and others, Fiske (1992) explicates how the fans are semiotically, enunciatively and textually productive.

### *Productivity*

Semiotic productivity is “the making of meanings of social identity and of social experience from the semiotic resources of the cultural commodity” (p.37). Fans may make sense of or derive meanings from the texts through their semiotic productivity, which is mainly an internal process. When these meanings are communicated to other people, another form of productivity, namely enunciative productivity is at work. Talk, for instance, is one of the means to manifest enunciative productivity. Fiske states that:

Fan talk is the generation and circulation of certain meanings of the object of fandom within a local community... much of the pleasure of fandom lies in the fan talk that it produces, and many fans report that their choice of their object of fandom was determined at least as much by the oral community they wished to join as by any of its inherent characteristics... many people become drawn into fandom as a means of joining that particular social group. (p.38)

As Longhurst (1995) simply puts it, “the communication to others of the meanings that we have made for ourselves, through talk, is an important way in which fans can form communities” (p.236).

In addition to talk, such nonverbal cues as clothes, accessories, hair style and make-up are distinctive tools for enunciative productivity. Fiske quotes the dressing style of Madonna fans as an example. He argues that people dressed like Madonna were not only constructing for themselves more empowered identities than teenage



girls in general but also trying to circulate those related meanings in the social context. Fiske continues that such a dress style may cause adult disapproval which “is an integral part of this sort of fan pleasure, for its arousal is part of the intention, albeit unstated and possibly unadmitted, of the enunciation” (p.38).

The third form of fan productivity, textual productivity, as Fiske points out, involves the production and circulation of texts among the fans themselves within the fan community. These texts include stories, paintings, songs and videos, etc. In general, Fiske’s arguments on fan productivity are in opposition to the thinking of Adorno the Frankfurt School that pop music fans are “numb fans”.

### **Fans, Media and Subculture**

Conceptualizing fandom as subculture for focus of investigation is a common practice among researchers. In reviewing the literature developed from the mid-1980s onward, Dell (1998) concludes that researchers tend to investigate fandom based on the specific group of fans marked by the types of media that the fans attach to, such as romance readers (Modleski, 1990; Radway, 1984), music groupies (Lewis, 1987, 1990), film buffs (Taylor, 1989; Uricchio & Pearson, 1991), and television fans (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1988, 1992; Penley, 1991, 1993).

Concerning television fandom, Gillilan (1998) finds that the fandom of a television series may provide the fans with a zone of resistance and reinterpretation where they can have full influence on the characters in their fiction. Harris and Alexander (1998) elaborate this “feminine” or “liberated” fandom suggested by Gillilan as “a protected location for oppositional or alternative constructions of dominant discourse.” Apart from this, Harris’s own study (1998) on television fans views

fandom “as a spectrum of practices engaged in to develop a sense of personal control or influence over the object of fandom in response to subordinated social status (p.6).”

In a study of the fandom subculture of professional wrestling, Dell (1998) regards the involvement in the fandom of the female fans of professional wrestling in the postwar period as “a tactic to temporarily evade patriarchy and redefine the notion of ‘appropriate’ female behavior.” In Harris and Alexander’s interpretation (1998), “Dell argues that the development of fan movements can be specific responses to significant historical social and cultural shifts that threaten or displace social identities (p.5).” The reviewers add that “some individuals may seek to express their otherwise silenced identities through a common interest in a symbol, icon, or text, and then redress their alienation through the social nature of fan practice.” In sum, fandom examined in light of subculture tends to be linked to the formation of identities and development of control over the object of fandom in opposition to dominant discourse.

Fandom can also be examined in the context of the computerized environment, which is a gaining more and more attention of current researchers. A considerable number of recent studies of Internet fandom have focused on the contribution of the new communication technology to the fans’ involvement in the fandom. MacDonald affirms that “virtual fandom broadens participation” and “a computer networked fan is an informed fan”. Baym (1998) argues that fans’ discussions on the topics regarding the object of fandom help maintaining the fans’ interest in that object and further suggested that fan discourse in the web environment can create a special kind of community surpassing the original object of fandom.

All the above literature concerns the fans and fandom in western countries. Generally, three major perspectives or lines of arguments can be found in terms of rationality. The first perspective views fans as irrational as obsessed loners or hysterical crowds. The second one regards fans as rational beings who can articulate their reasons for supporting a particular star. Some of the scholars even acknowledge the sensibility and productivity of the fans. The last view focuses on the possible “subversive” uses of the object of fandom within subcultures centering round a specific type of text or medium. Some of the researchers affirm the importance of the fans’ involvements and the possible influences of their involvements on the object of fandom and preserving their self-identities. In addition, the existence and development of virtual fandom and fan communities in the computerized world are now gaining increasing attention.

Compared with that in the West, Japanese literature on fandom lays more emphasis on the relationship between the fans and the idols. Moreover, the fans are seldom negatively delineated. Yano (1997) points out four characteristics or focuses of traditional research on fandom in Japan: the interdependence between fans and idol, the culturally-praised position of fans, the function of surrogacy performed by fans and the commercial operation of fan clubs.

### **Interdependence between fans and idols**

In Japan, there is a relationship of dependency between the public figure and the fan in the sense that the former seeks the indulgence of his or her fans (Lebra, 1976:54-55). Yano (1997) further argues that such dependency, in fact, works in both directions: “The fans support the public figure directly through economic means



whereas the public figure supports the fans directly through symbolic means. The very charisma of the public figure becomes defined by the devotion of the followers.”

### **Culturally-praised position of fans**

The position of the fan in Japan, according to Yano, is “culturally lauded”:

To be a fan is to exemplify cultural values of loyalty and dedication, service to one’s service to one’s public superior, and empathetic support. A fan is one who embarks upon a permanent relationship of servitude. The hierarchical nature of that relationship is taken for granted and may even be part of the attraction. A fan is one [who] is eager for the opportunity to serve, because in serving rests consummation of the relationship, binding the two together.

### **Function of surrogacy performed by fans**

Yano (1997) elaborates fans’ function of surrogacy as proposed by Lebra and states that a fan can serve as a private surrogate for the idol by singing his or her songs, and sharing his or her fame and triumphs vicariously. Through “empathy” or “empathetic internalization”, as Yano suggested, a fan achieves the role of a surrogate, who then publicly takes on the responsibilities and obligations of the idol, upholds the idol’s images, anticipates the star’s needs. Surrogacy becomes the greatest form of intimacy and the result this intimacy is that the fan takes on the burdens and glory of stardom of the idol.

### **Commercial operation of fan clubs**

Yano (1997) observes that fan clubs in Japan organized by record companies operate like public relations departments by promoting the idol singer in a variety of ways. Fan club members purchase the idol-related records and products, participating in promotional events, seeing stage and broadcast performances, requesting the idol’s

latest songs on television and radio, and singing his songs in karaoke boxes. A fan club serves as a marketing team constituting many individual members directing their effort toward the promotion of their idol. In Yano's own words, "a well-run company-based fan club does the work of not merely one promoter, but a myriad of small promoters, each an advocate within her local sphere."

Yano's review gives us a succinct summary of the traditional Japanese perspectives on fandom which stress fans' positions and functions. The positions of fans are given recognition and fandom is highly valued. Fans manifest such Japanese cultural values as loyalty and service and can serve the function of surrogacy. The relationship between the idols and the fans is a mutually dependent one, which is amplified through the fan club activities. Such functions, however, are subject to commercial or economic implications. The performance of the role as surrogates drives the fans to take the burdens of sustaining the idol's popularity and stardom as their own responsibilities. Under the organizational control of the commercial record company, fans inside a fan club even attempt to fulfill such responsibilities by combining their promotional effort to maintain the idol's popularity to satisfy the economic needs of the idol and the record company. This is how the interdependent relationship between the fans and the idols: The fans depend on the idol for psychological satisfaction while the idol depends on the fans for economic supports.

In her own analysis of the voluntary bonds between individuals within Japanese fan clubs using the concept of charisma, Yano (1997) even explicates the commercial logics behind fan club operation. She contends that a fan club is a "commercially created", "ritually maintained" community bound by "industrially produced and managed" charisma for continuous profit-making purposes.

In the local context, research on fandom has focused on the psychological characteristics and self-identity of the adolescent fans. In a survey investigating the psychological determinants of idolatry, Cheng (1997) argues that an adolescent with a low self-esteem and a high fear of negative assessment by others may join a fan club in order to identify himself or herself with a famous public figure and gain acceptance from peers. He also suggests the possible positive of being a fan club member on the adolescent's self-concept. According to him, through collective identification with an idol in various activities, adolescents find a common basis for formation of relationships and values, while having a role or experiencing success in highly valued tasks (e.g., being an executive member of the fan club, obtaining the idol's signature) raises their status and legitimacy as a leader among peers. His view is in line with other research results revealing that joining a fan club can help enhance one's self-confidence and social identifications (Wong & Ma, 1997).

Having reviewed the literature on fandom in the West, Japan and Hong Kong, I find that except Yano's study (1997) on Japanese fan clubs based on the concept of charisma, there is hardly any research using fan clubs as the focal point for investigation or as a unit of analysis. Although some western studies look into "collective" fandom in terms of fan communities formed as a result of TV series (Gillian, 1998) or existing in the computerized environment (MacDonald, 1998; Baym, 1998), fan clubs as social or commercial organizations have rarely become a focus for investigation. Seeing that the actions and performances of fans from fan clubs of popular singers are often reported in newspapers and magazines, I believe that fan clubs should deserve research attention. Apparently, fan clubs of popular



singers in Hong Kong are well-organized and systematic in operation. They can be regarded as a specific type of organization for examination.

## **Understanding the Organizational Dynamics of Fan Clubs**

For the specific purpose of this study which conceives fan clubs as organizations for investigation, the review of literature on organizations mainly focuses on applying those concepts of organizations which are found most relevant to the understanding of the organizational dynamics of fan clubs.

### **Organizations and modernity**

The study of organizations has often been associated with the concept and phenomenon of modernity and modernization. Giddens (1987) states that organization theory is inclined to contribute to the understanding of the institutional structures and processes where the foundations of modern society are built. Reviewing the works of Giddens, Reed (1992) also argues that “organizations engage in a temporal and spatial structuring to ensure that their members and client internalize rhythms and norms that fit individual behavior to the pattern of sequences demanded by modern industrial life” (p.6). Reed (1992) adds that “organizations become the central social units through and around which rhythms and patterns of modern urban industrial life are regulated and controlled” (p.15). The importance of organizations to the formation of society is acknowledged by Scott’s proposition (1987) that organizations should be viewed not only as tools for achieving goals but also as “actors in their own right” in the sense that they can “take actions, utilize resources, enter into contracts and own property”, and in such a way a society comprises “natural persons”, i.e. human beings, and “corporate persons” in the forms of organizations (p.6). In many modern societies, the fan club is one of the

organizational forms emerging in response to the prosperity of cultural industries as a result of modernization. In conceptualizing fan clubs as organizations for exploration, the study can contribute to the understanding of such a highly modern society as Hong Kong.

### **Elements of organizations**

Scott (1987) modifies Leavitt's Diamond Model of an Organization (1965) and identifies five elements of organizations, namely participants, the social structure, goals, technology and the environment. First, participants are the individuals who make contributions to the organization for some purposes or in response to some motivations. Second, the social structure is "the patterned or regularized aspects of the relationships existing among participants in an organization" (p.15), including the normative structure and the behavioral structure. The normative structure comprises values, norms and role expectations governing or prescribing the behaviors of the participants, while the behavioral structure concerns the actual behaviors, actions, and activities of the participants, and the interactions among these participants. Third, goals are the "desired ends" of the organization. Fourth, technology is the mechanism for transforming or processing inputs into outputs, whereby the inputs being transformed or processed and the outputs derived as a result of transformation or processing can be materials, people or symbols. Fifth, the environment is a specific physical, technological, cultural and social context that an organization must adapt to.

In application of these conceptual organizational elements to the case of a fan club, participants are the fan club members who support their adored artiste by promoting him or her, or by following his or her principles and behaviors. The normative

structure includes those values and principles guiding the behaviors and actions of the fan club members while the behavioral structure comprises the behaviors and actions actually exhibited by the members. Goals of the fan club and the members can be the generation of profits for the artiste and his or her record / management company, or the practice of the artiste' values and principles through participation in fan club activities. Technology within a fan club is mainly concerned with people. Some strategies or measures can be implemented to turn the fan club members into an effective promotional tool to support the artiste or to influence the fan club members' actions so that the members may manifest some acclaimed behaviors in accordance with the values and principles of the artiste. In order to survive and operate continuously, a fan club must interact with its surrounding environment where there are record / management companies, media corporations, advertisers, and sponsors, etc. for their cooperation and various supports.

### **Perspectives of studying organizations**

A fan club displays some of the prominent characteristics of an organization specified by the Classical Approach, which originates from the managerial perspective and emphasizes the attainment of high efficiency and effectiveness. First of all, a fan club has its missions and goals to be achieved; it implements certain strategies or measures to accomplish these missions and goals effectively. The very prominent mission or goal is definitely to support the object of fandom, i.e. the idol, and the commonest strategy to support the idol is to populate various public events associated with the idol. Second, inside a fan club, there is division of labor prescribing the duties and responsibilities of the constituting members working for the attainment of the missions and goals. Fan club managers, supervisors or coordinators, and chairperson(s) or leaders, and helpers are responsible for dealing



with different fan club-related affairs. Third, there is a hierarchical power relationship where the “authority”, i.e. the organizing committee can command, lead or motivate the ordinary members’ to perform their “supporting” duties, sometimes through some kinds of rewards.

A fan club may exhibit some distinctive organizational features, in addition to those illustrated by the Classical Theory, based on the Human Relations Approach stressing the importance of friendship, leadership, emotional communication and participation from the perspective of “human beings”. A fan club, with the idol as a “spiritual leader”, summons members’ affection and support for the idol. Members’ supporting actions are motivated and rewarded by their satisfaction with the opportunities to approach the idol.

A fan club may manifest the characteristics of both the “formal organization” prescribed by the classical Theory from the viewpoint of the organizing or managerial party and the “informal organization” explicated by the human relations approach from the perspective of the majority of participant members. This study attempts to examine the roles and functions performed by fan clubs of the artistes in the local popular culture context by accommodating both the perspectives of the organizing party and the fan club members. It examines how the roles prescribed and intended by the organizing party are carried out by the performing fan club members in order to see if there is a compatibility of goals or interests between these two parties and how effective that role is. Accordingly, the study will be oriented to the synthesized and “more comprehensive” structuralist approach which takes into account both perspectives. Based on a wider range of organizations including factories, business organizations, hospitals, prisons, churches, armies, social work

agencies and schools, the structuralist approach acknowledges the innate tensions “between organizational needs and personal needs”; “between rationality and non-rationality”; “between discipline and autonomy”; “between formal and informal relations”; “between management and workers”; and “between ranks and divisions” (Etzioni, 1964). An organization is viewed as “a large, complex social unit in which many social groups interact (Etzioni, 1964)”. These groups simultaneously have shared and incompatible goals or interests, cooperating in some aspects while competing in others. These operations and reactions also occur in the fans clubs in Hong Kong and probably fans clubs in other parts of the world.

### **Levels of organizational analysis**

Scott (1987) proposes three levels of analysis for the study of organizations. First, “the social psychological level” focuses on the attributes and behaviors of individual participants within the organization. Second, “the structural level” is concerned with the characteristics and functions of some subdivisions or segments of the organization, and the relations between these subdivisions or segments. Third, “the ecological level” is interested in the characteristics and actions of the organization as a whole and its relationship with the environment.

Basically, the current study, which aims to examine the organizational dynamics, extensively covers the three levels of analysis mentioned above by looking into the organizational goals and intentions of the fan clubs (the ecological level), the strategies and measures employed by the organizing committees to achieve the goals (the structural level), and the behaviors and actions carried out by the individual members in response to the goals set by the organizations or organizing committees (the social psychological level). However, in reporting the data and presenting the

results, the study will use its own *two-level analysis*. First, it will look into the fan clubs' organizational goals and the organizing committees' strategies together at *the organizational or managerial level*. Second, it will probe into the fan club members' behaviors and actions at *the individual or operational level*.

## **Research Methods**

Approaching fan clubs as organizations which lay varying degrees of emphasis on the practice of certain kinds of functional roles in commercialization and / or moralization, the study attempts to examine several artiste-based fan clubs in Hong Kong in order to explicate their respective specialized functions. Preliminary studies have been carried out in order to identify some exemplary cases for investigation. Nine local artiste-based fan clubs have been selected for the preliminary studies, including Andy World Club (AWC) Limited, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club, Joey Yung International Fan Club, Kelly Chen International Fan Club, Sammi Cheng's International Fan Club, Vivian Lai's Fan Club, and the fan clubs of Amanda Lee, Alex Fong and Liza Wang. Joey Yung and Alex Fong, who are popular and emergent idols of today's local teenagers, are frequently exposed to the media. Their fan clubs, which were formed in the early 2000s, are being very active in supporting them in many public functions. On the other hand, the fan clubs of Teresa Teng, Amanda Lee and Vivian Lai continue to exist and operate, though in a rather "low profile", with the retreat, retirement or even the passing of the artistes. As for those who have secured their positions as famous or respectable artistes such as Andy Lau, Kelly Chen, Sammi Cheng and Liza Wang, the activities of their fan clubs and the actions of the fan club members, from time to time, can be observed in public events and found in local news coverage. All these nine local fan clubs appear to exhibit certain kinds of functions representative of certain



specific types of fan clubs; therefore, they have been chosen for preliminary investigation. Methods employed in the preliminary investigation are mainly in-depth interviews with the fan club committees and ordinary members, participant observations in music shows or concerts, and secondary data analysis of fan club documents such as newsletters and correspondence.

From the results of the preliminary studies, three fan clubs, which display distinctively different performances, have been identified for further detailed examination in this thesis: Joey Yung International Fan Club, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club and Andy World Club (AWC) Limited.

Joey Yung International Fan Club seems to work as an arm for the commercial management company. Fan club members have been observed to carry out enthusiastic supporting actions in promotional events and music shows related to Joey. It is, therefore, assumed to perform a major role in commercialization. On the other hand, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club exhibits totally different behaviors. It remains low-profile, continues its operation even after the passing of the artiste and organizes charity concerts annually in her memory. It seems that the club can separate from commercial influences and play a prominent moralizing role based on the spiritual values of the artiste. Besides, Andy World Club (AWC) Limited stands distinctively as a company limited set by the artiste, Andy Lau, himself. AWC members have been seen to actively participate in public events to support Andy, but at the same time, they are well-known for their self-discipline and uniformity. They appear less ardent than Joey's fans but more active and high-profile than Teresa's fans. Accordingly, AWC may be viewed as a distinctive type of fan club situated somewhere between the commercializing Joey Yung International Fan Club and the

moralizing Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club along a “commercialization-moralization continuum” (which forms the analytical framework of the thesis and will be explicated in Chapter 3).

Empirical data have been collected through participant observations in fan club functions, committee meetings and backstage preparatory work, and in-depth interviews with fan club staff, committees, leaders and ordinary members. In addition, some of the printed organizational documents, website information and news coverage of fan activities and behaviors have been referred to and analyzed.

### **Chapter 3      Framework for Data Analysis and Interpretation: A Commercialization-Moralization Continuum**

The thesis seeks to examine the roles of fan clubs, in light of the aspects of commercialization and moralization, in the fandom within the Hong Kong popular culture context. First of all, I am going to define and clarify some of the key terms of the above thesis statement so as to develop a foundation or framework for the whole research to base on.

#### **What is “fandom”?**

“Fandom”, since it started to become quite a popular research topic in the 1990s, has hardly been given a very clear definition. Taken for granted, the term “fandom” has often been referred to extensively by many authors in their research papers; however, it has never been defined or explained explicitly. In the introduction of the book <Theorizing Fandom>, Harris (1998) acknowledges the lack of theorization on fandom: “(F)ans and their social and cultural environment (‘fandom’) are profoundly untheorized in the social sciences. pp.3-4)” The book approaches fandom in different perspectives, but the definition of fandom has not been illuminated yet. Rarely do the individual chapters explicate the term “fandom” in a succinct way. However, the above statement made by Harris’s has already given an insight into the meaning of fandom: We should pay attention to the social and cultural environment of fans.

Since this study seeks to investigate the roles of fan clubs played in fandom in the context of popular culture in Hong Kong, the term “fandom” necessitates a clear



definition as a base for this issue of investigation to start with. The word “fandom” is disregarded in many authoritative contemporary English dictionaries<sup>2</sup> though a definition written in Chinese can be found in an English-Chinese Dictionary<sup>3</sup> where fandom refers to “fans” as a group. To give a definition to it, I will first break it down into two parts, namely “fan” and “dom”, and look at their individual meanings. After that, I will try to derive a combined meaning from the two parts.

A “fan” means “an enthusiastic admirer or supporter of something or somebody” in <Oxford Advanced Learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary>. <Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English> also provides a similar definition: A fan is “a very keen follower or supporter of a sport, performing art, famous person, etc.” <Collins Cobuild English Dictionary> states the common usage of the word: “If you are a fan of someone or something, especially a famous person or a sport, you like them very much and are very interested in them.” Based on the synthesis of these definitions, I define a fan as “an enthusiastic supporter of an artiste” so as to suit the specific context of my thesis, namely the popular culture in Hong Kong.

“-dom” is a suffix which, when added at the end of a noun, means (1). “rank or domain of”<sup>4</sup> or (2) “group of”<sup>5</sup> that preceding noun. Accordingly, the combination of “fan” with “dom” produces “fandom” which can be interpreted as (1) rank or domain of the fan(s); or (2) group of fans<sup>6</sup>. Drawing on both meanings, I conceive

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<sup>2</sup> These dictionaries include Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Collins Cobuild English Dictionary, and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English.

<sup>3</sup> The dictionary is entitled <English-Chinese Dictionary (Unabridged)>.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the addition of “dom” to “duke” forms “dukedom”, meaning the position or rank of a nobleman of the highest rank (duke) or the territory of that nobleman (duke). Another example is “kingdom” which means the country or state ruled by a king or queen.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, “officialdom” means officials as a group.

<sup>6</sup> The meaning that “fans as a group” accords with the definition found in <The English-Chinese Dictionary (Unabridged)> mentioned in footnote [2].

fandom as the territory of a group of fans with the same supported object, where the fans have shared values and common practices regarding the support of that object. Furthermore, as the unit of analysis and the sites of investigation are the individual fan clubs of the local artistes in this thesis, fandom will particularly refer to fandom within the specific fan club context. Thus, for example, fandom of Andy Lau will mean the territory of the members of his fan club, Andy World Club (AWC). In this thesis, the roles of fan clubs played in their respective fandoms will be examined, with special attention given to the investigation into (1) how the organizing parties of the fan clubs lead, influence, adjust the members' actions, behaviors, performances, practices and values through the arrangement of fan club activities and functions and / or other measures and procedures, and (2) whether the members act according to the organizing parties' intention or expectation, and if so, how they actually perform.

### **The fan club as an organization**

An organization is "a collection of individuals who have been brought together to carry out tasks to achieve set aims" (Dimpleby and Burton, 1992, p. 112). By this definition, a fan club can be conceived as an organization. It consists of a group of fans with a common idol. Obviously, the primary aim is to support this shared idol. To achieve this aim, fan club members have to carry out certain "tasks" like participating in various fan club functions and music shows, and buying the idol's records and products.

Many fan clubs of young popular singers in Hong Kong have been formed by the singers' record / management companies. In fact, the clubs have become subsidiary organizations working for the controlling record / management companies. From the point of view of these record and / or management companies, a fan club can



serve as a promotional tool and provide a pool of easily-accessible customers for consuming products associated with the idol. In this thesis, fan clubs will be examined from an organizational perspective with special attention given to how an entertainment company-formed fan club performs a commercializing role to the benefit of that “mother” company.

On the other hand, fan clubs formed earlier on a voluntary basis, let us say in the 1970s and 1980s, remain low-profile but continue to operate. Their fans do not exhibit conspicuous or over-enthusiastic supporting actions in public for the promotion of their idols. Given that the running of these early-formed fan clubs is not determined by commercial values or profit-making interests, there may exist other values, such as those “acclaimed” values or principles of the idols, which guide or underlie the fan club operation. This is what I call the moralizing role of a fan club.

### **Organizational roles of a fan club**

Generally and simply speaking, a fan club gathers a group of fans or supporters who have a common idol, and organizes activities for them to approach and support that idol. This organizing role of a fan club is obvious and easy to comprehend. The roles of a fan club being examined in this thesis are beyond the organization of activities for members to support their idol. Rather, a fan club’s role will be investigated in two other aspects: commercialization and moralization. By these, I mean that a fan club can play a commercializing and / or moralizing role(s) in the fandom.



### ***What is the commercializing role performed by a fan club?***

The word “commercialize” means “(try to) make money out of something”. By this definition, “commercialize” and its noun form “commercialization” can be associated with “making money”. Although the term “commercializing role” or “role of commercialization” has never been coined to denote the performance of fans and fan clubs, previous studies have already noticed and alluded to this commercial function within the fandom. As what Harris and Alexander (1998) say, “To the media industries, fans have traditionally represented an important constituency to be measured, controlled, co-opted, institutionalized and appropriated for their value as ready market for products and as a public relations tool (pp. 4-5).” Yano (1997) also argues that “fan clubs organized by record companies become effective extensions of a public relations department. This thesis seeks to explicate this noticeable function performed by fans and fan clubs, which has been suggested but not yet elaborated by previous research. In this thesis, a fan club performing a commercializing role can be understood as taking certain actions which can contribute to the making and accumulation of money and profits. This commercializing role can be interpreted at two levels in terms of who initiates or prescribes the fan club role and who actually performs or practices that role: (1) the controlling party or organizing committee of the fan club, and (2) the individual members constituting the fan club. At the level of the organizing party, the fan club *turns its members into a promotional tool* for the popularity of the artiste concerned and *makes the members a pool of potential consumers* ready for the artiste-related products for the sake of earning money. At the members’ level, the fan club which comprises a group of fans sharing a common idol, as a whole, *executes the intended role as a popularity promotional tool* for the idol and *as a pool of potential*

*consumers* of the idol-related products. In view of this, a fan club's commercializing role is twofold: being an agent of commercialization by acting as a popularity promotional tool, and being a target for commercialization (i.e. profit making) by consuming the products associated with the artiste. In performing the fan club's commercializing role, the members may think and act in a "commercialization-oriented" way in order to achieve the goal of making profits. Thus, a possible result of the performance of the commercializing role by a fan club is the modification of or influence on the members' values, action and practices in the fandom for the attainment of the profit-making goal for the artiste and his or her record / management company. A fan club which exhibits a very prominent commercializing role is said to be a "commercialization-oriented" fan club in this thesis.

### ***What is the moralizing role performed by a fan club?***

The word "moralize" means "talk or write (usually critically) about right and wrong behaviors, especially in a self-righteous way". Therefore, "moralize" and its noun form "moralization" can be associated with "talking about values and attitudes". Besides, Rosin and Singh (1999) review previous literature (Rozin, 1997; Rosin, Markwith, & Stoess, 1997) and define moralization as "the accretion of moral value to activities or substances that previously had no moral value", a term which captures "the process of conversion of a preference into a value within a culture and in individual lives." Synthesizing all these definitions, I interpret moralization in a fan club as the transformation of personal preferences, beliefs and principles of the idol into acclaimed values to be adopted and incorporated into the club's operation and to be introduced within and / or beyond the club. In this thesis, a fan club performing

a moralizing role<sup>7</sup> can be understood as operating according to the idol's personal values and principles which are acclaimed within the club. Like the commercializing role, this moralizing role can be understood at two levels. From an organizing party's point of view, it introduces or reinforces the personal values and principles held by the artiste (while ignoring or downplaying those perceived negative values). On the other hand, from the members' viewpoint, they practice these values during their participation in the fan club activities and / or in their daily life. It follows that the members may have personal learning and development, perceived or actual, through their involvement in the fan club activities. A possible consequence of the performance of the moralizing role by a fan club is that the thinking, action and practices of the members in the fandom are guided by the values advocated by the fan club and the artiste. A fan club which manifests a prominent moralizing role is viewed as a "moralization-oriented" fan club in this thesis.

### ***Fan clubs along a "commercialization-moralization" continuum of organizations***

The commercializing role and the moralizing role are not mutually exclusive. Both roles can coexist within a fan club. In fact, the roles of a fan club can be viewed as a continuum with commercialization at one end and moralization at the other. Different fan clubs may place different degrees of emphasis on the roles of commercialization and moralization. As mentioned above, a fan club which displays an overwhelming commercializing role is regarded as commercialization-oriented while the one which shows a major role in moralization

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<sup>7</sup> The moralizing role of a fan club stresses the practice of personal values, principles and behaviors of the idol, ranging from such concrete practices as diligence and filial duty to more abstract philosophies like respect, love and care. Those economic or commercial values pervading the commercialization-oriented fan clubs are differentiated and excluded from these personal values and practices advocated by the moralization-oriented fan clubs. Having said that, commercialization-oriented fan clubs which operate according to certain values, being commercial in nature, are not counted as moralization-oriented fan clubs which emphasize the idol's personal values.



is considered moralization-oriented. Besides these two categories, there exist other fan clubs which display both the commercializing and moralizing roles. These fan clubs belong somewhere along the continuum and are said to be “dual-purpose” in this thesis. By studying three “artiste-based” fan clubs in Hong Kong, namely Joey Yung International Fan Club, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club and Andy World Club, I examine where they are located along the continuum, as well as why and how they are situated in such a way.

### ***Examination of roles of a fan club at two levels***

The role(s) played by a fan club, whether commercializing, moralizing or both, will be analyzed in two perspectives: (1) the perspective of the organizing party or committee, and (2) the perspective of the members comprising the fan club as a whole. This “two-level” analysis helps to examine both the intention and the actual performance of a specific fan club for the evaluation of the effectiveness of its performing roles in the fandom, and of the compatibility of the goals between the organizing party and the fan club members.

Based on the commercialization-moralization framework elaborated in the previous paragraphs, the next three chapters examine the roles of the fan clubs of three selected artistes in the Hong Kong popular culture context, namely Joey Yung, Teresa Teng and Andy Lau.

Chapter 4 explicates the commercializing role of a fan club with the case of Joey Yung International Fan Club, a “commercialization-oriented” fan club. Chapter 5 deals with the moralizing role of a “moralization-oriented” fan club by using the case of Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club. Chapter 6 uses Andy World Club as a case to

illustrate a “dual-purpose” fan club which exhibits both the commercializing role and the moralizing role in the fandom. Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Joey Yung International Fan Club

Joey Yung International Fan Club is found to exhibit the characteristics of an organization performing a distinct commercializing role. This chapter seeks to explicate this commercializing role from an organizational perspective taking into account both the intention and strategies of the organizing party, and the performance and actions of the participating fan club members. Joey's fan club was set up by her management company for the promotion of her popularity. The commercializing role of the fan club is intended by the organizing party, and performed by the fan club members through their participation in the fan club functions.

The Organizing Party: A Commercial Entertainment Group, EEC

Joey Yung International Fan Club was established by a commercial entertainment company, Emperor Entertainment Group (EEG). Created in 1997, EEG is a local entertainment and artistic management group principally engaged in film production and distribution; artistic management; and event production. In light of the current climate of rampant piracy, EEG management is becoming a more credible money-making business than with theatrical film production. Accordingly, promotional effort is directed to recruit the public as customers to potential advertisers and event organizers instead of concentrating on selling records to the public audiences. Founded by a profit-seeking company for artistic management, the fan club intrinsically has the nature of serving as a site of capitalization by providing promotional efforts.

## **Chapter 4      The Commercializing Role of a Fan Club:**

### **Joey Yung International Fan Club**

Joey Yung International Fan Club is found to exhibit the characteristics of an organization performing a distinct commercializing role. This chapter seeks to explicate this commercializing role from an organizational perspective taking into account both the intention and strategies of the organizing party, and the performance and actions of the participating fan club members. Joey's fan club was set up by her management company for the promotion of her popularity. The commercializing role of the fan club is intended by this organizing party, and performed by the fan club members through their participation in the fan club functions.

#### **The Organizing Party: A Commercial Entertainment Group, EEG**

Joey Yung International Fan Club was established by a commercial entertainment company, Emperor Entertainment Group (EEG) Limited. EEG is a music entertainment and artiste management group principally engaged in music production and distribution; artiste management; and event production in Hong Kong. Under the current climate of rampant piracy, artiste management is becoming a more credible money-making business than music production and distribution. Accordingly, promotional effort is directed to marketing the artistes as commodities to potential advertisers and event organizers instead of concentrating on selling records to the public audiences. Founded by a profit-seeking company focusing on artiste management, the fan club intrinsically has the mission of serving as an agent of commercialization by providing promotional effort.



### **Promotional Need for a Rising Artiste --- Joey Yung**

In 2000, EEG formed Joey Yung International Fan Club as a means to accommodate the promotional need for an emergent local singer, Joey Yung. According to one of the fan club chairpersons, “EEG estimates the market value of a new artiste. If necessary, it will “create momentum” for him or her to increase his or her popularity.” In late September 1999, Joey released her first extend play (EP), <Not Yet Known> (未知). The EP had remained the ‘top one’ record in the IFPI billboard for three weeks and successfully achieved “double platinum sales” in the year of 1999. Joey also won a couple of “new singer” musical awards in the same year. Both sales and awards showed that Joey was an emergent popular singer. In view of Joey’s potential in the music market, EEG formed a fan club to gather the supporting strength of her fans for the promotion of her popularity.

### **Turning the Fan Club into a Promotional Tool**

EEG implements concrete strategies and measures to turn the fan club members into a tool to promote Joey’s popularity and products. For example, it employs personnel to manage the fan club, takes over all fan club-related administrations, arranges promotional fan club activities, provides conspicuous supporting props, commands members’ supporting actions, uses members to support other EEG-related artistes and tries to main a constant workforce.

#### ***1. Appointing Personnel for Fan Club Management***

For easy command of members’ actions, EEG has employed a few staff to exclusively deal with the fan club-related affairs. These staff oversee and coordinate the fan clubs of those artistes managed by EEG, looking after and

controlling the fan club members. In line with EEG's emphasis on promoting new potential artistes, these staff members often give top priority to the fan clubs newly formed for the new artistes. The chairperson has pointed out the systematic running of fan clubs by these EEG staff:

"Now, only EEG has a special unit to deal with fan club affairs. Other record or management companies may not organize fan club functions. They just contact fan club leaders and that's all. EEG has got two to three staff members to look after its fan clubs, handling all fan club-related matters. One of them puts information onto the fan club websites. The other one is responsible for leading fan club functions, observing the order and the "momentum created". The third one deals with both internal and external matters. They want to know who we are. Better relationship means easier control. They take care of all fan clubs (of EEG). When Twins first appeared, they paid more attention to Twins' fan club. They tried to watch the new fan club. As new members did not know much, the staff tended to look after them first. Now, Twins' fan club is on the right track, so they do not need to give so much attention to it as they used to. They are now shifting their attention to Bernard Chow and his fans."

The coordination of all the EEG-organized fan club affairs by a group of staff members means that the allocation of these human promotional resources among the fan clubs is more flexible. Ad hoc arrangements are possible and can be done according to specific situations to maximize the promotional effect. In some TV/radio station-organized music shows and award ceremonies where several EEG artistes are present at the same time, EEG staff usually give the seats in the front area to the fan clubs with more members confirming their presence in the event. In this way, fan clubs with more participating fans can attract the attention of the people and the flashlights of the media there, thus achieving a larger promotional effect.

In addition to employing staff members, EEG selected committee members for its fan clubs. The committee of Joey Yung's fan club consists of two chairpersons and three leaders. Their major responsibilities include contacting the fan club members,



maintaining good relationship with the members, leading the members to “create momentum” to support Joey, making props for supporting Joey, buying presents to be given Joey during public performances, decorating venues for fan club gatherings, processing membership applications and collecting money from the members for participation in fan club activities. The committee members are deprived of big decision-making power or duties. Instead, as the fan club is a subsidiary of the company, they naturally follow the commands from EEG and their staff members to execute the plans decided and create an influence on other members.

The implication of EEG’s employment of paid staff members exclusively for managing the fan clubs of its artistes is that the fan clubs can be used as an available popularity promotional tool which deserves the investment of human resources. The employed staff members manage and control the fan club members as a promotional tool at two levels. At the upper level, instead of letting fan club members elect among themselves, the staff members appoint the committee for easy control of the committee members to fulfill their commands. At the lower or frontline level, the appointed committee, who executes EEG’s commands, leads the fan club members to perform their promotional role by “creating momentum” for the popularity of the artistes.

The EEG staff members are the ultimate commanders of the EEG-managed fan clubs with the appointed committee members taking an occasional leading role in times of “creating momentum” for popularity promotion. The committee members, being appointed rather than elected, are responsible to the appointing EEG staff members instead of the fan club members. As a result, the fan club members, whether committee or ordinary, are highly controlled by EEG, i.e. the organizing party. The



lack of autonomy and decision-making power of the fan club itself ensures the direct and smooth control of the organizing party over the fan club members for the purposes of promotion, commercialization, and in the end, profit making.

## ***2. Taking over all Administrations***

The second strategy of EEG is to strengthen its control on its fan clubs. EEG puts all fan club-related administrative matters and procedures under its name. Joey's fan club is no exception. The fan club does not possess its own fixed office or mailing address. All incoming membership application or renewal forms need to be mailed to the head office of EEG instead. If the fan club committee members need to help process the membership applications and make some supporting props, they can temporarily occupy some of the spaces within the EEG office building to carry out these duties. All the outgoing correspondences that are sent to the fan club members are printed on paper with EEG's letterhead. Only by the seal can Joey's fan club be distinguished from other EEG-organized fan clubs. Neither does the fan club have its own official website. Rather, fan club information is placed within the official website of EEG, <http://www.eegmusic.com>. Electronic membership application or renewal forms can be downloaded from this website only. On the whole, the operation of Joey Yung's fan club is under the name and management of EEG. The absence of an independent identity makes the fan club a powerless "subsidiary" in service of its mother company, EEG. Accordingly, the fan club needs to provide services in whatever possible ways to fulfill the mother company's commercial goals.

### ***3. Arranging Fan Club Activities for Popularity Promotion***

The third strategy is the arrangement of fan club activities for popularity promotion. All fan club activities are arranged by the organizing party, EEG, and led by the staff members together with the fan club committee. Whether activities are organized by EEG or hosted by outside organizations, they provide opportunities for the fan club to gain exposure to the public or the media to perform its promotional duties.

EEG-organized fan club activities are usually confined to the participation of the fan club members who may come with their families, relatives and friends at times. People in the general public without the company of a fan club member cannot be admitted to these activities. During the period of participant observation, EEG hosted two fan club functions exclusively for the fan club members to meet Joey: a fan club party on April 27, 2002 admitting the fan club members only, and a birthday party for Joey on June 16, 2002 allowing the members to come with their companions. Though participation from the public is prohibited, these exclusive fan club functions are open to the media. Through the media coverage, the message that “Joey is very popular and has very supporting fans” can be delivered to the public and especially the potential advertisers who may want to “employ” Joey to sell their products contributing to the increase in Joey’s popularity.

Non EEG-organized fan club activities include music shows, concerts and award ceremonies hosted by radio or TV stations with sponsorship from some advertisers. Fan club members occasionally may help with the shooting of TV music programs and the recording of radio programs by participating as the audience of Joey on the spot. Above all, members’ promotional effort is mostly needed in events held in public areas with a steady flow of passers-by such as shopping arcades, busy streets



and karaoke boxes for promoting Joey's records and products with Joey as the "spokeswoman". In these functions, Joey's popularity is promoted or "created" by fans' enthusiastic supporting action in terms of shouting, chanting, and lifting of banners, flags and placards.

In arranging fan club functions for the members to support Joey, EEG usually considers the nature and occasions of the activities, and decides if it is appropriate or necessary to include fans' participation for popularity promotion. If so, the management company will treat the activities as fan club functions and dispatches its staff members and the fan club committee members to lead the functions. Besides, EEG may even take advantage of the media for popularity promotion. The activities mentioned above, whether organized by EEG or outside organizations, are usually subject to the coverage of the media, thus requiring the participation of the fans. For the music shows and award ceremonies with a few or many performing singers, fans' supporting action are necessary as the media and the audiences in the general public may draw comparisons among the "momentum created" by the fans coming from fan clubs of different artistes. Above all, the promotional events held in public areas for Joey-related products particularly entail fans' active participation. Fan's enthusiastic performances can visually demonstrate to the advertisers the popularity of Joey, their "employed spokeswoman" or product agent. While heightening Joey's popularity, the fans are promoting the products that Joey is selling as well. Thus, the supporting effort of the fans in these public promotional events, to a certain extent, can please the existing advertisers or even attract the prospective ones, somehow contributing to the process of commercialization or money making for Joey and EEG, the management company. In short, the commercializing role of



the fan club as a promotional tool is especially prominent and important in these public promotional events.

Occasions, which are not suitable for fans' participation for promotional purposes or can cause inconvenience to the artiste or the event organizers, are not counted as fan club functions. Normally, the fan club does not lead its members to attend press conferences despite the presence of the media. The main purpose of press conferences, is to release information and news about specific events to the media. Fan's chanting and screaming may just be an unnecessary disturbance to the dissemination of information. Fan club members are also discouraged from showing their support to Joey near the places of filming of movies, music videos, commercials and the like or outside radio stations when Joey takes part in the recording of radio programs<sup>8</sup> since fan's presence may delay the progress of filming or recording and disturb Joey's job schedule.

EEG attempts to take advantage of the available time of the individual members in order to make better arrangement of these human resources for their participation in fan club functions. Most of the functions take place at the weekend, on public holidays or in the evening, making it convenient for the members to take part in the fan club functions. For functions held in the daytime on weekdays<sup>9</sup>, EEG tends to resort to those members who have flexible working hours or do not have any jobs for supporting Joey. Every function can be a chance of promotion. By mastering the

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<sup>8</sup> Sometimes, a radio program may want to record the dialogue between the artiste and the fans as part of the program. In this regard, EEG may lead the fan club members to participate in the recording as a fan club function. Except for this special recording, the members are discouraged from waiting for Joey outside the radio station.

<sup>9</sup> During the period of participant observation, functions that were held during the daytime on weekdays included (1). the opening ceremony of Whiskers' Wild Ride in Fun Works Studio of the Ocean Park on Monday, (2). recording of a radio program for "Channel 881" of Commercial Radio Hong Kong on Tuesday, and (3). a promotional event for La Milky Way Jewelry on Friday.

availability of its members, the fan club can seize every opportunity to promote Joey's popularity.

The need for promotion determines the frequency of fan club functions. Fan club functions are held more frequently every time Joey releases her latest record or when the commercial in which she acts a product agent for the advertiser begins to be broadcast. "The summer of 2000 was the busiest period during which the fan club had functions almost every day", as recalled by fan club chairperson. By that summer, Joey had already released her second EP <Can't Miss the Chance (不容錯失)> and become the "spokeswoman" for Bossini fashion, Compass Visa, H2O+ skincare products, Oasis Spa, and Biore sanitary products. "Student" members who make up a considerable portion of the fan club were also available in their summer vacation. Therefore, fan club functions could be arranged very frequently to accord with the promotion of Joey's popularity and all these Joey-related products in that summer.

A series of intensive fan club functions for "recovering Joey's popularity" was triggered off by the "promotional boom" breaking out in late April, 2002 after Joey's return to Hong Kong from a two-month overseas study tour in the U.K., the U.S.A. and Japan. From late April till the end of September, 2002, which coincided with my participant observation period, fan club functions were held nearly three times a week. The arrangement of the fan club functions was in consonance with the promotion of Joey's record released in May and the commodities she sold on behalf of the advertisers. For example, the fan club led its members to support Joey in the promotional events for the noodle products of Nissin Foods Co., Ltd., H2O+ skincare



products and health drinks of Water Oasis Co. Ltd., jewelry of La Wilky Way, and fashion products of Heroic Rendezvous.

#### ***4. Providing Supporting Props for Promotion***

EEG equips fan club members with various “conspicuous” supporting props so that they can better fulfill their duty of promotion at the frontline level. First of all, every member is required to buy a “show gear set” including a fan club uniform, i.e. an orange windbreaker, and a light-stick from the fan club for supporting Joey in music shows and concerts. On some special shows such as music award ceremonies, the popularity momentum of Joey is particularly important since various artistes are present at the same venue. To enable the public and the media to quickly identify the fan club’s presence from the big auditorium, and to ensure the conspicuousness of the momentum created, and, the fan club committee always makes sure that each participating member in the show has brought the windbreaker and light-stick before giving out the admission ticket. A member who “breaks the rule” is often reprimanded and may be told to buy a disposable light-stick for supporting Joey in that show.

Besides the “show gear sets”, the fan club provides its members with banners, flags, placards, posters and “light-bulb boards” to support Joey especially during music shows and product promotional events in public areas. Most of the supporting props show Joey’s name in English or Chinese (祖兒). The props, which are made by the committee members, are very eye-catching with different sizes, shapes and colors. They not only attract Joey’s attention while she is on stage, but also demonstrate to other audiences and the media the popularity momentum created for Joey. The period of participant observation has seen the continuous increase in the



number and variety of the supporting props. New banners and flags have been made with the names of Joey's latest songs. A pair of cymbals was first used for supporting Joey in the <903 Music is Live Concert > organized by Commercial Radio and Manhattan Card Company Limited on June 26, 2002. These supporting props are counted carefully after the fan club functions and kept for repeated use in subsequent events.

In addition to the reusable supporting props, the fan club committee members, together with some helpers, prepare bouquets of flowers, bunches of jumbo balls, dolls, toys and various presents to be given to Joey every time she is on stage. The flower and jumbo ball bunches are usually loosely packed so that they are large and conspicuous enough for other audiences to see. Sometimes, empty boxes are nicely wrapped like "presents" and given to Joey. The presentation of flowers, gifts and the like from the fans to Joey during her show time simply points to the high popularity of Joey.

##### ***5. Commanding Members' Supporting Action for Promotion***

Instructed by the management company, the fan club committee directs members to create momentum for Joey's popularity in public events and activities on the front line. Once the members are seated in the auditorium, the fan club committee gives out the supporting props like banners, flags and placards to the members. Normally, the fan club members are sitting in clusters distributed throughout the auditorium with a committee member (and / or sometimes a constant helper) leading each of the clusters. During Joey's show time, the leader directs the members of his or her cluster to scream, and wave the light-sticks and the supporting props with the same rhythm or beat. He or she may also strike the cymbals to produce some sound

effects to heighten the momentum. Sometimes, to command the members to scream, the leader may even utter threats to those who are not “obedient”: “If you don’t shout, you won’t be allowed to attend functions next time”; or “Don’t you want to attend functions again?” In short, the leader makes every effort to sustain fans’ enthusiastic supporting action throughout Joey’s performance.

The committee is inclined to lead the members into more intense and radical actions in product promotional events where the environmental control in the venues may be much more relaxed. Innately, the context and setting of a music show or concert may set some restrictions for the ardent supporting action of the fans. Joey’s fan club often attends music shows and concerts held in the Hong Kong Coliseum, Hall 3 of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and Academic Community Hall (AC Hall) of Hong Kong Baptist University. The fixed seating in the auditoriums of these venues always acts as a physical obstacle to the fans’ movement. Besides, if the fans stand up on the seats, lift the supporting props improperly or run to the stage, they will be immediately warned by the working staff or security guards there. All these environmental checks on the fans’ movement and action, however, become much more relaxed in the product promotional functions held in shopping arcades, busy streets and other open areas. Accordingly, the fan club committee can lead the fans to take more progressive action to create a more crowded scene and generate stronger momentum for Joey’s popularity. While the setting of the product promotional event permits a much more crowded scene to be created, the need or intention to please the existing advertiser and attract those prospective ones also intensifies fans’ supporting actions. Both the external conditions and the “internal” intentions prompt the fan club to stage much more progressive actions in the product promotional event where the club can well exhibit its commercializing role as a



promotional tool.

To take an example, the two chairpersons led the members to create a “fence-pushing” scene in a health drink promotional function taking place in a busy street in Hong Kong. Female members and children were generally prevented from standing near the fence which was intended to be pushed, while some “smarter” male members and core helpers were selected and told to stand in the very front of the fence. Once Joey started to give out the promoted health drinks to the surrounding onlookers, the selected members started to push the fence forward. The surging momentum culminated when the security guards tried to control the chaotic situation by straightening the tilting fence from the opposite side and warning the crowd not to push forward. The planned action of these fan club members did succeed in creating momentum for Joey’s popularity as many newspapers reported the surge of the crowd and the enthusiasm of Joey’s fans in the promotional event the following day. Another example can be found in a promotional event of a casual wear brand. Besides commanding a “fence-pushing” action, the chairwoman took “radical” actions on her own in order to attract the flashlights of the media. The chairperson suddenly kissed Joey’s face when Joey was on the stage. This kissing act did achieve some promotional effect as the act gained a lot of coverage in the next day’s newspapers.

## ***7. Maintaining Workforce for Promotion***

To maintain and strengthen its promotional force for Joey’s popularity, the fan club makes extra efforts to preserve the existing members and recruit newcomers toward



the end of the “fan club year”<sup>10</sup> in July which is the time for processing renewal and new membership applications. The fan club tries to keep back the existing members in the face of natural turnover. Natural turnover of members happens in every fan club, according to the fan club chairman:

“There is natural turnover. First, fans like new singers. After they get the singers’ autographs, they go away. Second, fans want to see their idol. Once they have enough chance of seeing the idol, they leave. Third, there are too many alternative fan clubs. Fourth, little fans joined the fan club. A year later, their parents objected. Perhaps, they thought it’s dangerous (for the children to join the fan club alone) but they have no time to go with their children. Or, they saw their children could not get good results at school. Fifth, fans need to work and have no time (to join the fan club functions).”

It seems that the fan club can do nothing on this “natural” turnover. It cannot keep back those fans who just endlessly pursue new things and never remain faithful to Joey or those who are constrained by external forces like the opposition from the parents and the need to work. Therefore, in preserving the existing members, the fan club tends to pay special attention to those who really support Joey but are not satisfied with the insufficient chances of attending fan club functions:

“It’s important to make the members stay with the fan club. Renewal of membership is a very important issue... For those who’ve joined the fan club a few months before August, I’ll pay special attention to them and give them a sense of belongings. I’ll make them renew their membership and take special care of them... For those who attend functions actively, you don’t need to ask them and they will go for the renewal themselves. We are worried about the renewal issue. The focus should be on those who’ve already joined the fan club (before the end of the fan club year). Past experience told us that they thought they did not have enough chances to approach Joey...”

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<sup>10</sup> The fan club year normally starts on August 1 and ends on July 31.

Besides, the fan club tries to keep back those “good members”, possessing the two important qualities of obedience and active participation:

“They should be obedient, at least fulfilling our reasonable demands. For example, they have to shout actively (during fan club functions). If you just sit and remain quiet there, you’d better watch TV at home. You don’t need to join our club indeed. A fan should be actively participating in the fan club and its functions, trying to join every function provided that your job won’t be affected... Fans should listen to Joey and do what she wants them to do. In some promotional events, she encourages her fans to study hard, work hard and earn more money. Some of the fans follow Joey wherever Joey goes. Joey doesn’t like her fans wasting their time doing nothing. For those activities which are not considered fan club functions, fans should not attend. For example, they should not wait for Joey during filming at night. Nor should they wait for her at the airport. Fans have no right to know when Joey leaves or comes back to Hong Kong. The seeing-off last time (in early February, 2002) was just an exception because she would have to leave for a long time. Only in such a rare case might we inform the fans.

During the period of transition to a new fan club year, the chairman often keeps very close contact with the abovementioned “targeted” members they want to preserve. He tries to involve these members in fan club functions as far as possible and give them a sense of belongings in order to keep them back for the coming fan club year. As what the chairman said, preserving the existing members is a crucial issue. The maintenance of an available fan club workforce is really beneficial to the promotion of Joey and that of other EEG artists as well.

In addition to keeping back the current members, the fan club takes the initiative to recruit more new bloods to support Joey. In a music show in July 2002, the fan club distributed membership application forms to some of non- fan club audiences. In “selling” the fan club to the prospective new members, the fan club chairwoman simply pointed to the low cost of joining the club: “The annual fee is just \$120. That means every month you have to pay only \$10 to enjoy the functions and see



Joey. That's very cheap."

### ***7. Use of Fans for Supporting and Promoting Other EEG Artistes***

Not only does Joey's fan club support Joey in the official fan club functions, but it also participates in the supporting action and promotional functions for other artistes. This routine "promotional team" for Joey can be summoned to "work" for other artistes in various situations, if necessary. In some music shows or concerts with various artistes as performers, Joey's fan club members are required to show their support for other EEG artistes. They are usually led by the fan club committee to wave their light-sticks for Twins, Eason Chan, Nicholas Tse and 3T, all of whom are managed by EEG, though they may not be asked to shout or lift the supporting or promotional p props for t these artistes. Sometimes, a fter Jo ey's p erforming s ession, the fan club members are told not to leave the auditorium until all other EEG artistes finish their performances. The same "requirement" is applied to the fan clubs of other EEG artistes. The resultant scenario is that, when one of them, Joey, Twins or Eason, is performing on stage, scattered clusters of orange, purple (representative color of Twins' fan club) and white (representative color of Eason's fan club) light-sticks are waving in the auditorium. An EEG artiste can gain the support of the fans from all the fan clubs under the same management company, resulting in the multiplication of his or her popularity. Moreover, to safeguard its commercial interests, EEG restricts the use of the fan club to the promotion of its own artistes only. EEG does not allow Joey's fan club members to show their support for artistes who do not belong to EEG. In the <Top Ten Chinese Gold Songs Award Ceremony> hosted by RTHK, members who waved light sticks for non-EEG singers



such as Miriam Yeung<sup>11</sup> (of Go East) and Jay Chou<sup>12</sup> (of BMG) were reprimanded by one of the fan club chairpersons. The use of Joey's fan club even can be extended to the promotion of a specific artiste in a function totally unrelated to Joey. Promoting Lo Ka Leung in the autumn of 2002 provided a good example of this extended use of Joey's fan club. Lo Ka Leung is a singer who has a recording contract with EEG but does not have his own fan club, and he releases records only occasionally. Therefore, Joey's fan club was asked to support him in some musical programs when he promoted his latest record released in September 2002.

It is a common strategy of EEG to promote new artistes hand in hand with the existing popular artistes. For example, EEG arranged Twins<sup>13</sup> and 3T<sup>14</sup> to co-perform with Joey Yung in songs, MTVs, commercials, advertisements and / or public performances when these artistes or groups first appear in the music industry. In line with this "existing to promote new" strategy, Joey's fan club members play a part in the promotion of the new artistes belonging to EEG, just like what Joey usually does. Some members recall that the fan club has "helped a lot when Twins first appeared". During the participation period, the fan club members were summoned to support the company's newly emergent artistes such as Bernard Chow<sup>15</sup>, Kiki Ting<sup>16</sup> and 3T. Apart from this, some of the "senior" members of

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<sup>11</sup> Miriam Yeung is a young female popular singer in Hong Kong belonging to another record company, Go East. She is regarded as one of Joey's competitors in the local music industry.

<sup>12</sup> Jay Chou is a very popular composer and singer coming from Taiwan. His popularity is so surging that it may overwhelm the popularity of most of the local artistes. Waving light-sticks for him may heighten the already-overwhelming popularity and so such an action should be prohibited.

<sup>13</sup> Twins is a very popular singing group consisting of two girls in their early twenties, namely Charlene Choi and Gillian Chung. The group was first introduced into the music market by EEG in the summer of 2001.

<sup>14</sup> 3T is a collective name given to three young female singers together: Maggie Lau, Mandy Cheung and Yumiko Cheng. Basically, they have individual developments in the entertainment business. They were introduced into the music market concurrently in mid-2002.

<sup>15</sup> Bernard Chow, a young male singer, received much attention from EEG in the first half of 2002 and had his first song released at the beginning of the year. For some unknown reasons, Bernard seemed to have disappeared in the local music industry since the summer of 2002. After his

Joey's fan club were asked to be the committee members and leaders of the semi-formed fan clubs of 3T for these seniors had had much experience of creating popularity momentum. For those non-Joey-related fan club activities, EEG may provide "incentives" in terms of free or subsidized transportation, admission fees or meals, or even monetary rewards for the members for their "extra" promotional effort paid to other artistes. This was different from the usual practice that fan club members afford their own expenses involved in attending routine fan club functions to support Joey.

### **Targeting Joey's Products at Fan Club Members**

Not only does EEG explicitly use Joey Yung's fan club as a promotional tool for Joey's popularity and products, but also it treats the club as a target of commercialization for consumption of Joey-related products. The management company encourages fan club members to buy products associated with Joey by providing the related information for the members, releasing additional or revised editions of Joey's records, and setting special terms or conditions for approaching Joey in some public promotional functions.

#### ***1. Providing information about Joey-related products***

EEG provides information about Joey's related products through its official website at <http://www.eggmusic.com> and its self-owned magazine, <New Monday>. For example, the "Fan Club" section of the website promotes the "Star Mobile" services of New World Mobility "hiring" Joey Yung as a spokeswoman. To buy the mobile

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"disappearance", EEG shifted its attention another young male singer, Deep Ng.

<sup>16</sup> Kiki Ting is a young female composer and singer coming from Taiwan. She was first introduced into the local music market by EEG in the summer of 2002.



services, fans just have to click a few buttons on the computer. The EEG website provides a very user-friendly environment for the fans to consume Joey-related services. The encouragement fans' consumption of Joey-promoted services, at least, can please the advertiser concerned and facilitate further cooperation between EEG and the advertiser if this is not a term or condition stated in the advertising contract.

## ***2. Releasing Additional or Revised Editions of Joey's Records***

Realizing that fans are "loyal buyers" of their idol's products, EEG often introduces the second edition of a record a few months after the release of the first edition. The second edition usually has one or more songs, music videos and / or a different packaging. However, this new edition which requires a much lower production cost than the original one, is just attractive enough to prompt Joey's fans to buy. Unlike people in the general public who tend to buy either edition of a record for consumption of some specific songs they prefer, members of Joey's fan club often buy both editions in order to collect as many distinctive features about their idol's record. In fact, the release of additional or revised edition is mainly targeted at this pool of adoring fans, most of whom belong to the fan club.

## ***3. Setting Special Conditions for Approaching Joey in Public Promotional Events***

Consumption of Joey's products in promotional functions may bring about opportunities to approach Joey. In a promotional event of a casual wear brand in the summer of 2002, fans were required to buy a box set costing \$390 in order to get closer to Joey. The box set contains a certificate and the buyer was given the chance to go up to the stage to present the certificate to Joey who then issued a seal on it. Another example was found in a skincare product promotional function in October 2002. About ten seats in the auditorium were reserved for the fan club and



given to members on a first-come-first-served basis. Members who could not get the seats but wanted to get in the auditorium to have a better position to see Joey had to spend \$300 or more on the skincare products on spot. In these promotional events, fan club members were treated not only as a promotional tool to enhance Joey's popularity but also as a target for commercialization to buy Joey's products in these promotional events. The creation of popularity momentum for Joey and consumption of Joey-promoted products by the fan club members can contribute to the business interests of the advertisers. The advertisers may be very willing to continue cooperation with EEG, bringing EEG much profit.

### **The Performing Party: Fan Club Members**

The intended role of Joey Yung International Fan Club by EEG as a popularity promotional tool or a commercializing agent for Joey as well as other artistes concerned can hardly be performed without the co-operation of the fan club members. At the operational level, the fan club members can well acknowledge, clearly interpret and actively perform this intended role through their participation in the fan club functions.

### **Serving as a Promotional Tool**

Members' performance as a promotional tool is made possible by the time they are available for participation in the fan club functions. Most of the members are secondary students and teenagers without fulltime employment. There are also a considerable number of members who work during normal office hours between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. These members are normally available for participating in fan club functions which are often held at the weekend, on public holidays and in the evening. Some of the children or teenage members may also be

accompanied by their parents. The participation of members from different age groups in the fan club functions can demonstrate the public audiences that Joey is well received by people in different generations, enhancing Joey's popularity.

### ***1. Taking Enthusiastic Supporting Actions to Promote Joey***

Whole-hearted liking for Joey does summon fans' spontaneous, enthusiastic supporting actions to promote Joey in public occasions. Sometimes, fans may spontaneously demonstrate their enthusiasm and support for Joey even in the absence of leaders' command. When Joey shows up on stage in music shows, fans welcome her by waving their light-sticks, lifting the supporting props and screaming "Joey" and / or "Ah" very loudly at a very high pitch. They keep on "shouting the songs" along with Joey's singing. Fans seem to have consensus on the rhythms or beat of waving their light-sticks. They wave from one side to another slowly for slow-pacing songs, and moved the light-sticks forward and backward very quickly for fast-pacing songs. In addition, the presence of the media somehow helps to modify fans' actions and increase the fan club's promotional effect. Except the leaders and a couple of "camera-acceptant" fans, most of the members are afraid of being shot and appearing in news coverage. When fans see the cameras targeted at them, they tend to pay much more effort to lift the supporting props which can "save" them from being shot by the cameras. The lifting of banners, flags and placards bearing "Joey" with one accord may heighten Joey's popularity.

### ***2. Creating Stronger Momentum for Joey to Overwhelm Other Artistes' Popularity***

In the presence of non-EEG artistes and their associated fan clubs, Joey's fan club members are inclined to amplify their promotional strength to overwhelm the popularity momentum created by other fan clubs. When fans of other artistes' shout



very loud, some of Joey's fans may initiate "louder shouting" even without the instructions of the leaders. They coordinate their own action and encourage each other, "We shout louder when Joey shows up." For instance, when seeing fans of Gigi Leung, a competitive young female popular singer, lifting a banner with "Asian Queen --- Gigi Leung", a member would have a negative feedback on it. Fans may also compare their own fan club with other fan clubs in terms of the "promotional performance" in public events. One of the fan club members has said proudly, "We, Joey's fans first used the cymbals and other fans followed suit."

### ***3. Promoting Other EEG Artistes in exchange for Chance to Approach Joey***

Fan club members may think that their "assistance" and active performance in functions promoting other EEG artiste is rewarded. That is why they perform very enthusiastically in supporting these artistes. Some of the fans believe that good seats in concerts are often reserved for the fans who can shout very loudly and enthusiastically. Sometimes, their "belief" is "verified". For example, in the promotional activity for a new EEG artiste, Kiki Ting, some of the fan club members acted as her fans at the airport in the morning and in the Jumbo Boat in the afternoon. After that, they were given seats which are very the closest to the stage and could see Joey's performance from a very short distance. In fact, most of the members do not hesitate to create popularity momentum for other artiste as they think that they are just helping Joey's management company and that Joey understands what and why they are doing. When one of members questioned whether Joey would be unhappy about the fans' assistance in creating popularity momentum for Kiki, another member said, "She must know. When she first appeared, the situation was just the same." Here, "the situation" simply alludes to the use of fans in creating momentum for a new artiste. The fans understand that they are performing a promotional role for an



arising artiste. They also think that their idol understands or even tacitly approves of their supporting action for a new artiste under the same management company.

#### ***4. Initiating Actions to Enhance Joey's Popularity***

Fan club members may initiate their own supporting actions, which can enhance Joey's popularity in some ways. Fans' self-initiating supporting actions are mainly waiting for Joey in the car-park, asking for her autographs on photos and CDs, talking and giving letters or presents to her, and running after Joey's van. These actions are not encouraged by EEG because they may prevent Joey from leaving the venue for the jobs that follow and the media may not be present. However, the coincident presence of the media and the possible news coverage on these self-initiated actions, (such as the car-chasing actions or those occurring outside the major local radio stations) may help to increase Joey's popularity.

#### **Serving as an Easily-accessible, Constant Consumer Group**

The fan club members, themselves, are the agent facilitating the commercialization process in the sense that they serve as a promotional tool for Joey Yung, their worshipped artiste, by creating and heightening her popularity. They are, at the same time, the target of commercialization, i.e. the consumers of her records and at times, of her promoted products. A good example can be found in the consumption of Joey Yung's records by the fan club chairman: "I used to buy every album and every edition. For each edition, I bought two copies. One was for Joey's autography and self-collection while the other was for listening."

In most cases, fan club members consume Joey's products according to some measures implemented by the organizers of some promotional activities. For

example, in the promotional function of a local casual wear brand in the summer of 2002, members bought a box set containing a tee-shirt with Joey's image in order to get closer to her to receive a seal stamped by her. In another promotional event of a skincare product in October 2002, only ten seats were given to fan club members first come first served. The first ten members who reached the venue or those who spent \$300 or more on the products on spot could be admitted to the auditorium. In general, fan club members did not have a prominent advantage over non-members in this regard. Most of the members needed to spend in order to get into the auditorium to have a better position to see to Joey. A female fan club member even spent more than \$10,000. After all, the dual role of the fan club members as a promotional tool and as consumers of their idol-related products is evident in this single event.

### **Compatible Goals between the Organizing Party and Members**

The intention of EEG to use the fan club as a tool to promote Joey's popularity and products, as well as those of its artistes, to achieve its profit-making goal is very obvious and this intention is also converted into real actions by the fan club members. So far, the concerted effort between the organizing party and the fan club members in the promotion of Joey has been already explicated in the previous parts of the chapter. Some of the questions underlying this concerted action can be raised here: Why the fan club members are so co-operative and willing to be "exploited" as a promotional tool for her idol? Are they even aware of being used a promotional tool? Is the performance of a promotional tool out of the fans' affection for the idol and / or something else? The following section attempts to answer or at least to find some clues for the questions.



The fans' affection for Joey is absolutely undeniable. Their affection is reflected in their wish to seize every chance to see the idol. That is why they are willing to create popularity momentum for other artistes (such as Kiki Ting and Lo Ka Leung mentioned above) in exchange for opportunity to approach Joey. The fact that their goal of joining the fan club is to support Joey is also unquestionable. Their support is manifested in the consumption of Joey-related products, and the spontaneously enthusiastic actions in promotional events and music shows, sometimes even without the command of the leaders. Fans' goal to support Joey in fact goes in congruence with EEG's goal to promote Joey. What EEG wants is to obtain the promotional support from the fans to create popularity momentum for Joey while what the fans' pursuit is to support Joey actively, not only in consumption, but also in promotion. Fans' do not mind providing promotional service for Joey. This "perfect match" of goals between EEG and the fan club members make the building up of a noticeable team of promotion for Joey possible.

Joey's fan club members support Joey, her "colleagues", and eventually, her management company. Members tend to read the "political economy" of the local music industry. They know very well which singers belong to which record / management companies and evaluate the performances of the key players in the industry. "Miriam (a popular female singer in Hong Kong) changed her record company from Artists Capital to Go East. She also changed her management company and follows Parco (a famous manager for local artistes)," said a fan of Joey. "EEG is the big player (in the local music industry) now. It has Joey, Twins and Eason," said another fan. In addition, fans pay special attention to new singers and



their respective fan clubs. They commented on the new singers such as Cookies<sup>17</sup> (a group of female singers), Juno Mak, Shawn Yu and Edwin Siu<sup>18</sup> who emerged in 2002, and sometimes their fans. For instance, a fan said, “At first, I thought the song (of Cookies) was sung by Twins. Cookies imitates Twins.” Seeing the fans of Juno, another fan said with surprise, “Obvious, they (Juno’s fans) are ‘pretenders’”. It’s hard to believe that he’s got more fans than Edwin and Shawn.” The evaluations and comments are mostly in favor of EEG and its artistes.

Most of the members of Joey’s fan club are aware that they function as a promotional tool. They are clear that their loud screaming will be rewarded by better positions to see Joey. They also understand that they can use their promotional effort for EEG artistes in exchange for the chance to approach Joey and some extra material rewards in the form of money or meal. They think Joey will not mind their supporting other EEG artistes as they are helping her colleagues and her management company. In some cases, they adopt a way of thinking oriented toward a certain degree of commercial values: trading or selling promotional effort in exchange for rewards in monetary or psychological terms.

All in all, EEG established the fan club in order to promote Joey while fans’ joined the fan club in order to support Joey. When the support is directed to the promotional effort, the result will be the convergence of the goals between EEG and the fan club members. This convergence of goals also means the agreed views on

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<sup>17</sup> Cookies used to be a female singing group consisting of 9 girls. The group was introduced to the local music market in the summer of 2002 by EMI, one of the big five global record companies. When the group first appeared, it was often compared with Twins in terms of the voice and image. Hence, it was regarded as Twins’ major competitor. With the current exclusion of five girls, Cookies has been restructured into “Mini Cookies” comprising four singers.

<sup>18</sup> Juno Mak, Shawn Yu and Edwin Siu are young male singers, all of whom had their first records released in 2002. The rivalry between them was often a talking point in the local music industry in mid and late 2002.

how the fan club should function, i.e. playing a promotional role in enhancing the popularity of Joey, and sometimes that of other EEG artistes.

### **High Effectiveness of the Commercializing Role**

The effectiveness of a complete marketing campaign for a music record can be measured in quantitative terms like the sales of the record as a result of the combined efforts of the campaign. However, it is rather difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the role that a fan club individually plays in the promotion of an artiste's popularity and product by means of objective numbers or figures. Therefore, the effectiveness of the Joey's fan club in promotion of the idol is going to be assessed in qualitative or interpretive terms.

### **A Cheap and Reliable Promotional Tool Available for Use**

As a promotional tool, Joey's fan club is inexpensive, reliable and always available. The cost of running the fan club, which mainly includes the employment of a few full-time staff, some basic administrative expenses and expenditures on making supporting props, is not expensive at all. As for the part of the members, an annual membership fee of \$120 is required and money is needed to be spent on buying presents and flowers to Joey during her public performances. On the one hand, it seems rather irony that members need to pay in order to be a promotional tool in public functions, but are not "hired" to do so. On the other hand, it sounds rather "cost-effective" for EEG to run and maintain a fan club which can provide immediate promotional labor for Joey. Above all, Joey's fan club, which has a relatively long history in comparison with fan clubs of other EEG artistes, has proved to provide "experienced" fans for creating popularity momentum for subsequent emergent artistes such as Twins, Bernard Chow, Kiki Ting and 3T. Although it is



impossible to calculate in numerical terms how much Joey's popularity is raised and how many Joey-related products are sold as a result of the individual promotional effort of the fan club, it is an undeniable fact that EEG needs not spend much on managing the fan club, which, nevertheless, serves as a cheap and available promotional tool for its artistes.

### **News Coverage of Fans' Actions in Public Functions**

Members' actions in the fan club functions are often reported in local newspapers, which keep informing the public of the popularity momentum created by the club. Descriptions like "several tens of fans participated in the promotional event" and "the fans were very enthusiastic", and photos with the banners and placards as the background are very commonly found in the newspapers published on the day following a fan club function held in public. The effectiveness of the fan club's promotional role is implied in the ability of the fans to attract the flashlights of the media and gain publicity through its enthusiastic supporting actions. Their actions, at least, are effective in keeping the public informed that their idol, Joey, is very popular.

### **Members' Self-perceived Promotional Effectiveness**

Despite the difficulty in measuring how far the fan club has achieved its promotional role in exact terms, the effectiveness of the promotional role is assumed and perceived by the fan club members themselves. Many fans did believe, in consonance with the intention of the management company, that they should help to draw back Joey's popularity which had possibly dropped during her two-month departure from Hong Kong for overseas study in early 2002. Some of Joey's fan club members were convinced with their promotional effectiveness. One of the



members said, "We contributed to the large sales of <Something About You>." The record was released in May 2002 after Joey's overseas study.

### **Members' Actual Consumption of Joey-related Products**

Fan club members are one of the major customer groups that EEG and other advertisers target their products at. As shown in the previous sections, fans' consumption of every edition of every record of Joey and their purchase of Joey-related products in the promotional events organized by the advertisers concerned can demonstrate that fan club members effectively perform the role of a target of commercialization by consuming of Joey's commodities.

### **The Paramount Commercializing role**

From the very beginning, EEG has intended to form a commercialization-oriented fan club for promoting Joey Yung. It runs the fan club according to its commercial principles for profit-making purposes. Therefore, the fan club's commercializing role is very prominent and suppressing other non-commercial elements or activities, as reflected in the number of promotional functions and the priority given to promotion at the expense of social-services activities when there is time conflict.

Most of the fan club functions are promotional or commercial in nature. During the period of observation, only one event, namely the flag-selling or fundraising activity for Rehabilitation Alliance Hong Kong, could be counted as a moralizing fan club function as it practiced the value of care or charity. This kind of fundraising activity which is normally held once a year, however, gave way to a highly promotional activity --- greeting Kiki Ting, an emergent artiste from Taiwan --- when there was a time clash between the two activities. Fan club leaders encouraged

members to give up selling flags and go to the airport to create popularity momentum for Kiki instead. As a kind of incentive, EEG provided members with free transportation and lunch. This alternative activity was well supported by the members. Initially, most of the members joined the activity because they had “nothing else to do” or the chairperson asked them to do, but none of them seemed to join with the intention of doing charity work to help the needy. When they were given a new option, twelve of them voluntarily gave up selling flags and shifted to the greeting activity. The reasons for the shift of option were very simple and direct. For example, “(Greeting Kiki) should be better than selling flags”, and “I don’t want to ‘eat dust’ in the street”. This case showed that fan club members tended to devote their effort to serving as a promotional tool for an emergent artiste instead of doing charity work in the name of Joey Yung International Fan Club. The fan club, constituted of those members with a “commercial” mindset or mentality, reveals the overwhelming of non-commercial but acclaimed behaviors by the commercial force in that particular fan culture.

The intended commercializing role is paramount, and the fan club is guided by commercial values and principles. However, to a certain extent, the moralizing function, i.e. the incorporation of idol’s personal values (as defined in Chapter 3), can still be realized at the operational level by the participating members. This moralizing role is interpreted by fan club members in the form of their perceived positive learning from Joey Yung, their idol and from their involvement in the fan club activities. Many fan club members believe that Joey’s perseverance and determination do bring positive impacts to them. The followings are some of the members’ comments praising the qualities of Joey:



“At work, I’ve been through many ups and downs. Joey used to have such experience, too. I’ll carry on. Seeing her example, I’ll persevere.”

“She sings well. She’s substantial but not superficial. Appearance is not important. An ugly, little duck can turn to a swan. People didn’t think that she would be popular (but she turned out to be a pop singer). If you’re determined and set a goal for yourself, you’ll succeed.”

“She’s very persevering. Once, she had to record her album in the night and then leave Hong Kong the next morning. Moreover, when she first became a singer, she had to attend 10 functions on a day, from 8:00 in the morning to mid night. I was able to follow four of them. I did persevere, too.”

Fan club chairman is at times proud of his “decision-making” duty of “where the promotional props should be placed, what items should be bought, and which members should be asked to go to a certain function.” He also believes that he has learnt much from his involvement in the fan club:

“I’ve learnt how to manage and handle events that suddenly happen. And I could do something that I’d never thought of. For example, I’ve been interviewed in radio programs. Only government officials and pop stars can have this chance. I see and know more than people of the same age as mine. I know how to communicate with people. Most importantly, I’ve learnt about human relations. I used to remain quiet on strange occasions but I’m different now. If new fans come in but nobody is concerned about them, they’ll lose their sense of belongings. They’ll know little about the fan club and feel helpless. So, I take the initiative to talk to them and they may think that they have at least one friend in the fan club. After that, I encourage them to talk to other fellow members so that they’ll get familiar with one another. They’ll gradually be friends with one another and go to functions together. Later, they may go on to make friends with newcomers. The cycle just keeps on running like this.”

## Chapter Summary

Joey Yung’s International Fan Club can well illustrate the “commercialization process” in fandom of the local popular culture. The commercializing role of the fan club is determined by the organizing party, the artiste’s record and management

company. The fan club is established and highly controlled by this commercial company whose ultimate goal is profit making. Commercialization is always a means to attain this goal. The fan club, accordingly, is turned into a commercialized unit or more specifically, a quasi-marketing team for the promotion of the artistes of the management company. Staff members are specially employed to deal with fan club-related matters and fan club functions are highly related to promotional activities. The fan club serves as a promotional tool for the artiste concerned, and is further used for the promotion of other artistes having management or recording contracts with the management company.

At the operational level of the performing party, this commercializing role is well executed and enhanced as many fan club members perceive themselves as an effective promotional tool for the artistes concerned. They act as a promotional tool in exchange for the chance to get closer to their idol. They are an agent of commercialization in that they execute the promotional duty prescribed by the commercial management company, and at the same time, they are the target of commercialization in that they are the potential and actual consumers of the idol-related products.

So far, we have learnt that the commercializing role of the fan club is successfully performed through the collaboration between the organizing management company and the participating fan club members. However, the “contribution” of the media should not be neglected. The fan club’s commercializing role can be enhanced with the help of the media which frequently capture the crowded scene of the fan club functions and cover the action of the enthusiastic fans of the idol. Without situating themselves in the venue, the general public can still visualize the tumultuous



atmosphere and feel the popularity of artiste. Popularity can attract the potential customers to consume the products associated with the artiste and the prospective advertisers or sponsors to buy or support the performances of the artiste. In this way, the fan club, with its commercializing or promotional role, does contribute a part to the attainment of the goal of profit.

When performing its commercializing role, the fan club is simultaneously being commercialized. That is, it is being used or changed in such a way that it makes money or profit for the artiste and / or his or her record / management company. As the society is getting more and more capitalized, the gradual commercialization of fandom toward the goal of making profits can be speculated.

#### The Organizing Party — Voluntary Fans of the Artiste

The fan club is organized by the voluntary fans of the artiste. These fans are usually the core members of the fan club. They are the ones who are most loyal to the artiste and who are most active in promoting the artiste's work. They are the ones who are most likely to contribute to the fan club's activities and who are most likely to be involved in the fan club's decision-making process.

The fan club is a voluntary organization. It is not a profit-making organization. Its main purpose is to promote the work of the artiste and to provide a platform for the fans to express their love and support for the artiste. The fan club is usually organized by the fans themselves. They are the ones who are most loyal to the artiste and who are most active in promoting the artiste's work. They are the ones who are most likely to contribute to the fan club's activities and who are most likely to be involved in the fan club's decision-making process.

The fan club is a voluntary organization. It is not a profit-making organization. Its main purpose is to promote the work of the artiste and to provide a platform for the fans to express their love and support for the artiste.

## **Chapter 5      The Moralizing Role of a Fan Club:**

### **Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club**

Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club is found to perform a major role in moralization, incorporating the idol's personal values and principles into its operation. This chapter attempts to analyze the moralizing role of a fan club with the case of Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club (香港鄧麗君歌迷會). The fan club was set up in 1976 by a group of voluntary supporters of Teresa Teng for the arrangement of gatherings for the fans and the idol. The moralizing role of the fan club is intended by the organizing committee made up of the voluntary fans who try to run the fan club according to their idol's values and to perpetuate her spirit. The values are then practiced by the fellow members through their involvement in the club activities.

#### **The Organizing Party --- Voluntary Fans of Teresa Teng**

The founding of the fan club by these voluntary supporters precludes any possible controls or influences from external institutions. The chairperson, Cheung Yim Ling (張艷玲), talked about the background for the establishment of the fan club and its nature:

"We loved her voice very much and so we set up the fan club voluntarily. No record companies were involved. It was set up out of our interest. For most of the time, she was not in Hong Kong. Everyone knows about this. She often went overseas for concert tours... Every time she came to Hong Kong, we would know. She often asked Mr. Chung to tell us the time she arrived. Then we would pick her up at the airport. Mr. Chung did not work for any record companies."

#### **Moralization: Mission to Incorporate Teresa's Values into Operation**



From its inception in 1970s to the continuous operation in recent years, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club has been performing a *moralizing* role, i.e. incorporating and practicing Teresa's principles and values in its day-to-day running. In fact, the mission of the establishment of the fan club was very simple and pure: to unify a group of fans to support Teresa. "At that time, we had no specific objective. We just admired Teresa very much. We liked her very much. We felt very happy when we saw her and heard her songs. We hoped to gather a group of people who liked her as much as we did so that we could talk about her and supported her all together," said the fan club chairperson.

The operation of the fan club did not end with the passing of Teresa in 1995. Instead, the fan club had a turn in its objective of supporting their idol toward the perpetuation of her voice and values: "We hope that everyone will know Teresa and her songs. Her voice and spirit will live forever. That's why we continue to run the fan club," said the fan club chairperson. In perpetuating Teresa's voice, the fan club tries to introduce her songs to different generations with a special effort paid to the youth; in perpetuating her values, it does a lot of charity work to the memory of Teresa.

### ***Values of Teresa: Love and Care for Others***

Teresa dedicated herself to helping and caring for the poor and needy during her lifetime. As written by Tsang Sing Ming (曾醒明) in an essay in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary fan club publication, "Teresa is caring and benevolent. She devoted herself to lots of charity work, helping the poor and needy in the Chinese communities all over the world. Particularly, she cared for those Chinese refugees living in the northern Thailand, working hard for the education-related matters

there.” Gradually, these values of love and care held by Teresa become the guiding principles for the operation of fan club and the arrangement of fan club activities. In addition to love and care, Teresa’s principle of being low-profile guides the manners in which the fan club operates, organizes functions and deals with outside organizations, as well as the performance and practice of fan club members.

### **Performing the Moralizing Role**

To the fulfillment of the moralizing role, Hong Kong Teresa Fan Club arranges fan club functions, builds up a rational image for effective moralization, and recruits devoted fans to the club.

#### ***1. Organizing Public Charity Activities to Perpetuate Teresa’s Values***

Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club was set up to gather a group of fans to support Teresa. In the initial period of operation, fan club functions were mainly parties and gatherings to celebrate the coming of Teresa to Hong Kong. Game activities were also held every year. In these activities, the participating fan club members “guessed the most popular songs of Teresa and made up stories based on her songs”. In accord with Teresa’s low-profile personality, these gatherings and activities were often highly private in the absence of the media. The functions did provide opportunities for the fans to see their idol and to do some activities centering round her for the sole purpose of supporting her. They had nothing to do with the promotion of her popularity or her records. Apart from these “internal” functions, the fan club occasionally co-organized various charity fundraising events with some concurrent fan clubs of other local artistes like Liza Wang and Pricilla Chan. These charity events enabled the fans to practice Teresa’s values of love and care outside the fan club in the greater society.



Since the passing of Teresa in 1995, the fan club has been engaging in memorial charity activities with an aim to perpetuate Teresa's voice and values of "love and care". These activities are mainly record or video appreciation gatherings for the fan club members and charity concerts for raising funds in the public. Annual regular activities include Teresa's birthday gathering on January 29, Fan Club Anniversary Party on March 30, the memorial service in "Yun Yuan" (筠園) of Taiwan on May 8, and an autumn outing. During the period of data collection, the fan club had been involved in three public memorial charity concerts hosted (1) by TNT Production Ltd. on May 27, 2002 (忘不了鄧麗君紀念音樂會) for Christian Action (基督教勵行會), (2) by the Hong Kong Performing Arts Centre (HKPAC) (香港演藝製作中心) on June 15 & 16, 2002 (懷念鄧麗君金曲演唱會) for Lions Education Foundation (獅子會教育基金), and (3) by the club itself on August 10, 2003 (星願連我心 --- 鄧麗君情緣香江公益慈善晚會) for the Community Chest Hong Kong (香港公益金). Through the involvement in these public memorial events, the fan club can achieve its objective of perpetuating Teresa's voice and spirit:

"Today, many people still want to organize concerts or music shows in memory of Teresa. We feel very happy because we can keep on perpetuating her songs. Now, nobody come up to perpetuate Danny Chan and Wong Ka Kui (of Beyond)'s songs. You just occasionally hear their songs on the radio. They used to have fans and fan clubs, but nothing is done."

When engaging in these public charity functions, the fan club remained low-profile as before. "People may think that we are not active. But we just do what Teresa liked. She used to be low-profile and didn't like promotion. The purpose of the activities we organize today is to perpetuate her voice and values so that people will always remember her," said the fan club chairperson.



## *2. Using “Teresa” to Perpetuate “Teresa”*

To the fan club and most of the fan club members, Teresa herself is an acclaimed “value” and “everything about her” ought to be learnt and modeled. Accordingly, not only does it practice her values of love and care by organizing public charity activities to raise money for the needy, but also it perpetuates these values in the activities through the reproduction of her own images. In other words, fan club members believe that Teresa herself is a good “value” to be modeled and the modeling of this acclaimed idol is important to the perpetuation of her memory and spirit. Most fan club members maintain that audiences attend these memorial charity concerts because they want to recapture Teresa’s voice through the appreciation of the “quality” performance of her songs using her style. Therefore, any arrangements<sup>19</sup> which may distort or downplay this “quality” or “Teresa-like” performance are deemed inappropriate. For example, members discount the performance of Teresa’s songs by singers not imitating Teresa’s voice<sup>20</sup> or those not performing seriously and sincerely<sup>21</sup>. Members prefer the singing contest winners who can sing like Teresa to the young popular singers who have their own singing styles despite the possible use of the popularity of young singers to introduce

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<sup>19</sup> The HKPAC-hosted memorial charity concert on June 16 and 17, 2002 contained a 30-minute long ceremony session to honor the special guests and sponsors before the singing performance session. Several members left the auditorium during the ceremony and returned to their seats when the singing performance began. A committee member even kept on complaining throughout the ceremony. He said, “The fans go here to listen to Teresa’s song rather than see the ceremony. Now, 20 minutes are gone and the concert hasn’t started. Gigi Leung’s concert had many sponsors but it did not have such a long ceremony.” The long ceremony session played down the performance of Teresa’s songs in the sense that it took away half an hour from the total concert time of three hours. Fan club members were dissatisfied and disappointed with such a program arrangement.

<sup>20</sup> In the same charity as the above, fan club members were dissatisfied with the performance of a singer who did not sing in “Teresa’s way”. A fan club committee member commented, “Her singing was fine but her voice was not suitable for singing Teresa’s songs. The committee member also assumed that the singer had the chance to sing because of her good relationship with the organizer.

<sup>21</sup> In the same charity as the above, members were discontented with the playful and entertaining performance by a local “humorous” singer who is usually hired for providing entertaining performances in private banquets, gatherings and shows.



Teresa's songs to the younger generations. Chairperson shows her dissatisfaction with the performances of Joey Yung (容祖兒) and other young local female singers in the TNT-hosted memorial charity concert held on May 27, 2002:

"TNT explained that it wanted to have a breakthrough in the performance of Teresa's songs so as to introduce Teresa to the youth. Then, not only the adults, but also the youth will know Teresa and listen to her songs. I don't think this is suitable... It invited Joey Yung because she is popular. Those reporters who stayed at the concert hall from the beginning to the end probably wanted to wait for her and take photos of her (who was the last performer). But her breathing sound was too much... I dare not say that her performance was totally bad. She did try very hard. She can never sing like Teresa, but we just want less breathing sound. She sang seriously but couldn't remember the lyrics and sometimes went out of tone," said the fan club chairperson.

As a result, whenever the fan club host memorial charity events where it reserves full autonomy in the program arrangements and list of performers, it makes every effort to stick to Teresa's image as a means to perpetuate and realize their idol's values of love and care by raising money for the poor and needy. The self-hosted <Teresa Teng Memorial Concert 2003> held on August 10 invited several "quality" artistes such as Jo Jo Cao (曹眾) and Fong Yee Kei (方伊琪) who could give "quality" performance of Teresa's songs according to the program arrangements set by the fan club.

In sum, members do think that the supremacy of Teresa manifested in the performance of songs with her style should be upheld in any memorial concerts for raising money for charity. This conviction well demonstrates the extremely high moralizing role of the fan club in using "the best of Teresa" to perpetuate "the best values of Teresa" through charity work, i.e. using Teresa's voice (reproduced in the "Teresa-like" performance by existing singers) as a major means to achieve the goal of the perpetuation of her values of love and care, which are realized in the

fundraising and charity activities.

### ***3. Building up a Public Serious, Rational Image for Effective Moralization***

Teresa's low-profile principle has applied not only to the operation of the fan club but also to the actions of the fan club members. The low-profile supporting actions can help build up a serious, rational image for effective moralization of Teresa's values as the public may be more confident of participating in the charity functions organized by the club. The fan club chairperson admitted that the fan club had set some "oral regulations" to control the ardent actions of the members during the gatherings with Teresa: "Perhaps we were conservative. We didn't want the fans to be too enthusiastic or act crazily. They were not allowed to shout. They shouldn't come very close to Teresa to ask for her autographs or whatever else." This discouragement of fans' enthusiasm by Teresa's fan club does bear a remarkable contrast to the deliberate leading of fans' ardent actions by the commercialization-oriented fan club illustrated in the previous chapter. The zealous actions of the fans in the latter fan club are accepted, encouraged and even made use of by the organizing party or the management company to attract the attention of the media and the public for the promotion of the popularity of the artistes concerned so as to achieve certain commercial goals.

### ***4. Recruiting Whole-hearted and Faithful Fans to Perform Moralizing Role***

The admission of whole-hearted and faithful fans to the fan club is vital to the fulfillment of the mission to "moralize" Teresa's voice and values. Instead of absorbing as many membership applications as possible for building a powerful popularity promotional crew for the idol, the fan club used to screen its members to eliminate those who joined the fan club for purposes such as making fun or making



friends with girls. The club conducted informal “admission interviews” with the applicants to test their knowledge about Teresa and their liking for her. A male member who has been staying with the fan club since its establishment recalled the interview scenario: “At that time, I was asked about my occupation, perception of Teresa and the purpose of joining the fan club. I needed to show them (the interviewers from the fan club) that I paid attention to the news about Teresa in my daily life.” The policy of recruiting devoted fans remains the same as time goes by. The only thing that has changed is the cancellation of the screening procedure. “If you really appreciate Teresa and want to learn more about her past history from us, we definitely accept,” said the fan club chairperson.

### **Maintaining the Moralizing Role in the Face of Fund Shortage**

To fulfill the moralizing role and keep on practicing Teresa’s values, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club realizes the importance of preserving its autonomy and decision-making authority<sup>22</sup> from any possible external controls. To do this, the fan club tries to remain self-financed in its day-to-day operation, relying on a major source of income coming from the annual membership fee<sup>23</sup>. However, lacking in funding, it may not be able to carry out some special activities by itself. Thus, at times, it may get some sponsorship for launching these special activities. In order not to lose its autonomy in day-to-day running to those external bodies that give financial assistance, the fan club accepts sponsorship only if it is necessary for the

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<sup>22</sup> The committee has full autonomy in the operation of the fan club. Committee members hold meetings to discuss important issues, make major decisions concerning the fan club and arrange functions for the fans. In the data collection period, the fan club committee had a meeting on June 4, 2002 to discuss the feasibility of co-organizing a public dance performance based on Teresa’s songs with a dance club and the possible logistics concerned. The Chairperson is responsible for all fan club-related matters, overseeing the operation of the fan club and doing major liaison jobs. She chairs committee meetings, liaises with outside institutions like Teresa Teng Foundation and TNT Production Limited for co-operation in public memorial activities, and keeps close contact with Teresa’s family and her fan clubs from different countries such as Taiwan, Singapore and Japan.

<sup>23</sup> The current annual membership fee is HK\$150.

launching of special events. The production of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary fan club publication in 2001 was sponsored by the Teng family provides one of the examples. The Teng family, according to the fan club chairperson, is always a supportive and reliable sponsor:

“We made this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary fan club publication with all our heart. We spent one to two months making this. This is 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. How many ‘25<sup>th</sup> anniversaries’ can we have? ... For the production of this publication, her brother sponsored a lot. Our fan club is very lucky. Sometimes, when we want to organize a special function, the Teng family will support us. We devote ourselves to Teresa and the fan club. We want to perpetuate her spirit. Her family knows all this and always supports us.”

In addition, the hosting of public memorial charity events would have been impossible but for the various support from outside sponsors. On August 10, the fan club hosted <Teresa Teng Memorial Concert 2003> (星願連我心 --- 鄧麗君情緣香江公益慈善晚會), which blended different performing styles like musical performance, dancing, singing, and drama, to raise money for the Community Chest Hong Kong. The club had obtained sponsorship from more than 10 various bodies such as Teresa Teng Foundation, TNT Production Ltd., Universal Music Hong Kong, RoadShow, Hong Kong Tramways Ltd., Star Promotion, iStarNet.net, Golden Star Entertainment Ltd., Studio2, CHRISTIAN CHAUVEAU, Guang Zhou Impact Audio-Video Ind. Co., Ltd., and Lamour Wedding Center.

When confronted with a shortage of funds in launching public charity activities, the fan club may also resort to the co-operation with outside organizations. However, co-operation is only made when necessary as there is always a trade-off between the overcoming of the fund shortage difficulty and the sacrifice of its decision-making authority to the host organizations over the activity arrangements which may distort or downplay the performance of Teresa’s songs. In 2002, it involved itself in two



public memorial charity concerts by assisting TNT Production Ltd. and co-organizing with the Hong Kong Performing Arts Centre (HKPAC) to raise funds for Christian Action and Lions Education Foundation respectively.

Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club performs a very active moralizing role by incorporating Teresa's values and principles into its operation for the ultimate goal of perpetuating Teresa's voice, love and care. From the daily operation of the fan club to the final fulfillment of the club's mission, Teresa's spirit is always the supreme guideline to base on. The moralizing role of Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club as a whole, or from the perspective of the organizing party, has been already illustrated in Part I of this chapter. Part II of the chapter will go on to shed light on the practice of the moralizing role from the perspective of the members constituting the fan club.

## **The Performing Party: Fan Club Members**

Intended and led by the organizing party or committee, the moralizing role of Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club is also actively supported and practiced by the constituting members. The perpetuation of Teresa's spirit is not only the supreme mission of the fan club, but the shared aspiration of Teresa's fans as well. The determination to perform the moralizing role for the perpetuation of Teresa's spirit pervades the whole fan club, guiding the actions of both the committee members and the ordinary members.

### ***1. Participating Actively in Memorial Charity Activities***

While the organizing committee makes every effort to run the fan club in accordance with Teresa's values of love and care through its engagement in charity work, the members show their support by actively participating in the memorial charity

functions organized or arranged by the fan club. They contribute both money and energy to these memorial charity functions by buying the admission tickets and assisting in the preparatory work respectively. For example, fan club members ardently participated in <Teresa Teng Memorial Concert 2003> on August 10 both as the audience and the helpers. They helped to pack the concert souvenirs backstage, greet the special guests, and look after the booths selling Teresa's souvenirs before they sat down and enjoyed the concert.

Besides supporting the fan club in the memorial charity functions, individual members may even carry out proactive action to perpetuate Teresa's spirit. Examples of individual members' practice of the moralizing role, i.e. taking action for the sake of perpetuating Teresa's spirit and values, can be found in the successful fighting for the creation and display of Teresa's portrait in Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong, a celebrity wax portraits museum at The Peak; the management of a quasi-official fan club website; and the perpetuation of Teresa's voice and exchange of information beyond Hong Kong.

## ***2. Fighting for the Creation and Display of Teresa's Wax Portrait***

The successful fighting for the creation and exhibition of Teresa's wax portrait<sup>24</sup> in Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong<sup>25</sup> by the fan club is really a milestone in the perpetuation of the memory and spirit of Teresa beyond time. Madame Tussaud's is a wax portrait museum which creates and exhibits wax portraits of famous,

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<sup>24</sup> The wax portrait took about seven months to be completed at a cost of around HK\$350,000. The portrait has been placed in the Music Legends Section of Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong and officially open to the public since May 3, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Madame Tussaud's has regional offices in London, Amsterdam, Las Vegas, New York and Hong Kong. Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong is located at The Peak Tower, a well-known tourist spot in Hong Kong.



influential and respectable celebrities and public figures in recognition of their achievements and contributions. Teresa's significance in the contemporary era was much recognized when she became a member of the "portrait family" in 2000.

The creation and exhibition of Teresa's wax portrait in Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong has both symbolic meaning and practical significance for the perpetuation of Teresa's spirit. Symbolically, the exhibition of Teresa's portrait is an honorable recognition of Teresa's achievement in and dedication to the Asian music industry. As what the chairperson said, "All the wax portraits represent the celebrities... Michelle Yeoh, Andy Lau and Jackie Chan are international superstars. All of them have their own wax portraits because they have contribution to the entertainment industry." In fact, the symbolic significance is not just confined to the entertainment industry but can go further beyond that. Chinese political leaders, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Ze Men, also have their wax portraits exhibited in the museum, both of whom are great people in the contemporary history of China. Apart from political leaders, the museum displays the wax portraits of other contemporary influential or respectable celebrities like David Beckham, Yao Ming, Lee Lai Shan and Li Ka Shing<sup>26</sup>, all of whom have achievements in or contributions to their respective areas of specialization. The display of Teresa's portrait together with all these influential public figures in the same museum is definitely a very important recognition of Teresa's lifetime accomplishment in this era.

Practically, the wax portrait is a surrogate for Teresa to which the fans can get close to and show their respect as if they saw their idol in the real context. Fans have

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<sup>26</sup> Yao Ming is a Chinese basketball champion and Lee Lai Shan is the first Hong Kong athlete who won the championship in the Olympic Games in windsurfing. Li Ka Shing is one of the richest, and most famous and influential businessmen in Hong Kong.



repeatedly visited the museum and paid tribute to Teresa by laying flower bouquets beside her portrait. The wax portrait, situated alongside a display of Teresa's most favorite costumes, jewelry and personal accessories, reproduces the image of their late adored idol whom are always missing. To the younger fans who have never met Teresa before and will never have such a chance in future, the portrait is really a representative surrogate of Teresa that can fulfill their wish of taking photos with their idol. The significance of the portrait as a representative memorial to Teresa is stated by the Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong. "Since Teresa's portrait has been introduced, we have noticed that many fans are treating Madame Tussaud's as a shrine to Teresa Teng. This makes perfect sense as the exhibition is really the only permanent Hong Kong memorial in her honor, now that Teresa's house<sup>27</sup> has been closed to the public," said Martin Yim, Visitor Services Manager for Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong.

Besides, the creation of the late idol's portrait has significance for the fan club. In most cases, the museum decides which celebrities or public figures should have their wax portraits exhibited, and then initiates the creations. However, the creation of Teresa's portrait was put forward and fought for by the fan club, the help of a teenage participating member, Ivy Chow<sup>28</sup>. Ivy, with her good command of English, mainly

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<sup>27</sup> The House of Teresa is located at 18, Carmel Road, Stanley, Hong Kong, and managed by a fan club member called Kam Mei. Teresa bought the house in 1986 and left a lot of her memories there. The house was open to the public from May 2000 to May 2001 for a year. It was particularly crowded at weekends and it was reported that 800 visitors came on one Sunday.

<sup>28</sup> The young fan's effort contributing to the winning of support for the creation of Teresa's portrait was recounted by the fan club chairperson as follows:

"The girl said many celebrities had their wax portraits in the Peak and wondered why Teresa did not have hers. She thought Teresa was very famous and her portrait should have been made and placed at the museum in the Peak. She wrote a letter to the museum and requested the creation of Teresa's portrait. However, we did not get any reply. Later she found the address of the UK office of the museum. She sent a letter there, telling them Teresa's achievements. The UK office then told the Hong Kong office to follow up the case. Soon after that, the Hong Kong office faxed to us, asking us to discuss the creation of wax portrait with them. The greatest merit should go to the girl. She sent letters to the local and overseas offices, and won their support for the creation and display of Teresa's portrait in the Peak. The portrait has been displayed there since May (2002)... The manager of the Hong Kong office helped us a lot because Ivy could communicate with him in English very well... They were very happy to make the portrait, and so



dealt with the liaison jobs with the museum, which consists of English-speaking staff members. She took the initiative in proposing the creation of Teresa's portrait, closely followed up the proposal and frequently liaised with the museum on behalf of the fan club. The fan club committee, on the other hand, with lots of knowledge on Teresa, provided the necessary information for the museum for the explanation of Teresa's significance, especially in the Chinese communities. It took nearly a year for the fan club to win the support from Madame Tussaud's for the creation of Teresa's portrait. General Manager of Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong, Edward Fuller, has acknowledged the effort of the fan club paid to the exhibition of Teresa's portrait:

"We are absolutely delighted to be perpetuating the memory of Teresa Teng by permanently featuring her likeness in the Madame Tussaud's Hong Kong exhibition.

I would like to extend our gratitude to Teresa's family, TNT Productions, the Teresa Teng Fan Club and of course Ms. Ivy Chow, for without their continual support and assistance, the creation of Teresa's portrait would not have been possible," Edward said.

From the perspective of the participating members, Ivy's contribution to the creation and exhibition of Teresa's wax portrait exemplifies how a fan practices the moralizing role for the perpetuation of the spirit of the adored idol in collaboration with the fan club. She is the initiator of the honorable portrait project for Teresa, her late beloved idol. With her high English proficiency, she also acted as an intermediary between the museum and the fan club. Her contribution to the accomplishment of the wax portrait has been acclaimed by both parties. Fan club chairperson had acknowledged Ivy's help several times in the in-depth interview, repeatedly saying that Ivy "fought for the creation of the portrait on behalf of our fan club" and "the portrait wouldn't have been made if Ivy hadn't sent letters to the

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were we. Most of the discussions were in English and Ivy discussed with them on behalf of us. They liked her very much."

museum". Moreover, as the initiator of the portrait project, Ivy played a very important part in the opening ceremony of the portrait on May 2, 2002. Ivy, together with Teresa's brother, Jim Teng, was invited to unveil the portrait of the late legendary superstar to the public. Ivy was also given credit for her proposal and support for the establishment of the portrait. Her "heart felt" letter<sup>29</sup>, as called by Madame Tussaud's, which requested the creation of Teresa's portrait, has been extracted and published in an article in the "Latest News" section of the museum's official website to provide background information about the creation of the portrait. All this credit recognizes the significant part that Ivy has played in the fulfillment of the moralizing function of the fan club for the perpetuation of Teresa's spirit.

All in all, accomplished by the concerted effort of the fan club and its member, the wax portrait symbolizes the lifetime achievements of Teresa and serves as a representative memorial that her adoring fans can practically approach and pay tributes to. Thus, the exhibition of the portrait is really a milestone in the perpetuation of memory and spirit of the late legendary superstar, Teresa Teng.

### ***3. Managing a Quasi-official Website for Perpetuation of Teresa***

The abovementioned teenage fan, Ivy Chow, also set up a website in 1997 to the memory of Teresa. The website, "Generation T", is created and maintained by Ivy Chow. While the fan club does not possess a website of its own and the relatively

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<sup>29</sup> An excerpt of Ivy's letter is provided here:

"As a fan of Teresa Teng, I really hope that a wax portrait of Teresa Teng could be made for the exhibition in Hong Kong. Not just as a fan, but as a Chinese person, I truly believe that Teresa's fame and popularity is already a strong and convincing argument for my suggestion...

Through the Internet, I was surprised to find many other young fans like myself, who were able to appreciate Teresa and her music only after her death. You can imagine how sad it is to think that you will never have the chance to meet your idol and take pictures with her.

However, a wax portrait made like her would surely be a real blessing, since the wax portraits your company makes resemble the real person so much. I am positive that many fans, including myself, would be very grateful that the seemingly impossible wish of taking a picture with our idol, Teresa Teng, could be fulfilled."



well-known Teresa Teng site managed by Star East (東方魅力) has become invalid, “Generation T”<sup>30</sup> created by Ivy can fill this gap and serve as a quasi-official website for the fan club<sup>31</sup> for the perpetuation of Teresa. As shown in the contact list, the website has connected fans from different parts of the world, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Australia, the U.S.A., Canada, Belgium, Germany, and other European countries. Hence, Ivy’s website can enhance the dialogues on Teresa-related issues among the fans from various regions and contribute to the perpetuation of Teresa to different places around the world.

Ivy’s “Generation T” is recognized by Teresa Teng Foundation (鄧麗君文教基金會), the most accredited and reputable organization dedicated to the perpetuation of the memory of Teresa. The foundation’s website has developed hyperlinks with a few well-known websites in memory of Teresa, including International Teresa Teng Fans Club of Taiwan (鄧麗君國際歌迷台灣俱樂部), Teresa Teng’s Legacy (永恒鄧麗君歌迷聯絡站), and Lily’s Teresa Teng Memorial Page, which are representative Teresa-related websites of Taiwan, Singapore and Japan respectively. The inclusion of Generation T” in the list of hyperlinks reflects that the website is being recognized.

#### ***4. Perpetuating Teresa’s Voice and Information beyond Hong Kong***

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<sup>30</sup> “Generation T” contains a wide variety of information and resources about Teresa, including her profiles, life story, songs and lyrics, photos, wallpapers, e-cards and midis, etc. Besides, the “Extra” section, which comprises sub-sections of “Fan Contact”, “Voting Booth”, “Discussion Forum”, “Guestbook”, is an interactive platform for the fans to make their inquiries, voice their opinions, and contact and discuss among themselves.

<sup>31</sup> In fact, the fan club recognizes the use of the website for the perpetuation of Teresa. At times, the chairperson may ask Ivy to place some information and articles about onto the website. Ivy may also refer some of the inquiries and requests put down in the guestbook to the chairperson for follow-up. In this way, the website serves as a quasi-official website bridging between the fan club and the fans and helps the club to perpetuate the memory of Teresa.

The frequent contact between the fan club members and Teresa's fans in Mainland China enhances the exchange of information and promotion of Teresa's voice across the border, making the perpetuation of Teresa's spirit beyond the territory possible. Some of the fan club members keep in touch with Teresa's fans in Mainland China via the Internet. In this way, the fans from both Hong Kong and China can know what memorial activities are going on in their counterparts' place and then make arrangements for the participation in the activities if possible. When visiting China or greeting the fans coming from there, the Hong Kong fans often give their counterparts some of the Teresa's albums or other Teresa-related souvenirs which might not be available in China.

Ah Jack, a middle-aged member of Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club, has made friends with the fans from the "web-existent" Mainland China Teresa Teng Fan Club (鄧麗君中國大陸歌迷會) through the Internet. He visited some of the fan club's committee and ordinary members when he went to Shanghai a few years ago. Moreover, when a fan from Guangzhou, who is a webmaster for the "web-existent" fan club as well, came to Hong Kong to see the <Teresa Teng Memorial Concert 2003> in August, Ah Jack had a tea gathering with the fan and gave her some albums of Teresa. They talked about Teresa's songs, images, performances and articles related to Teresa, etc. The two-hour tea gathering did witness the exchange of ideas on Teresa-related issues between the fans from Hong Kong and Guangzhou, contributing to the perpetuation of Teresa's spirit into Mainland China.

Individual members' communication with the fans in Mainland China fosters the promotion of Teresa's voice to the large population of Chinese people beyond the border. This "trans-border" promotion is particularly significant as the perpetuation



of Teresa's spirit can be extended beyond Hong Kong to Mainland China, a place where the large population of Chinese people who used to have little chance of hearing Teresa's songs. With the central government's increasingly open policy on popular music and the wide use of the Internet in recent years, people in Mainland China can have easier access to the Teresa's songs and information. The fans in Hong Kong, who possess a lot of knowledge and information about Teresa can take advantage of this opportunity to actively communicate with the fans in Mainland China. The Hong Kong fans try to find out what their counterparts in China need and then provide them with those necessary resources. This "trans-border" communication, therefore, greatly contributes to the promotion of Teresa's voice and the perpetuation of her spirit in Mainland China. The establishment and maintenance of this communication can also demonstrate the individual member's effort in the practice of the moralizing role in the perpetuation of the memory of Teresa.

The chapter has already illuminated the practice of the moralizing role of Hong Kong Teresa Teng fan club from the perspective of the constituting members at an individual level. Fan club members devote both money and energy to various charity functions to the memory of Teresa, promote Teresa's voice to places in Mainland China where there is a lack of information or resources about Teresa, manage a quasi-official fan club website for connecting fans from different parts of the world, and contribute to the creation and exhibition of Teresa's portrait as a milestone in the perpetuation of her memory. All these are substantial evidences of the effort that Teresa's fans have made to the execution of the moralizing role of the fan club.

## **Concerted Goal between the Organizing Committee and Members: Perpetuation of Teresa's voice and values**

The moralizing role of Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club is performed both at the managerial level by the organizing committee and at the operational level by the fan club members. The perpetuation of Teresa's voice and values as fulfillment of the moralizing role is the paramount concerted goal that inextricably intertwines members at different levels within the fan club and therefore summons their unanimous action. At the managerial level, the moralizing role is intended and led by the organizing committee that incorporates Teresa's values into day-to-day operation and dedicates itself to various memorial charity activities for the perpetuation of Teresa's principles of love and care. At the operational level, members support the moralizing role of the fan club through concrete practice. They actively take part in the memorial charity functions organized by the fan club, provide Teresa-related information and resources for fans outside Hong Kong, maintain a quasi-official website for the fan club for linking up Teresa's fans from different regions of the world and fight for the creation and exhibition of Teresa's portrait to immortalize the memory of Teresa. All these actions, whether performed at the managerial or operational level, converge on the attainment of the concerted goal --- the perpetuation of Teresa's voice, and values of love and care.

## **High Effectiveness of the Moralizing Role**

Thanks to the concerted goal and action between the organizing committee and the fan club members, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club effectively performs the moralizing role for the perpetuation of the voice and values of Teresa. The effectiveness of this moralizing role is reflected in the increase in membership, support from Teresa Teng Foundation and the Teng family, outside organizations'



invitations to organize memorial charity functions and recognition by various parties.

### **Increase in Membership**

The continuous increase in membership evidences the achievement of the fan club's objective of the perpetuation of Teresa's voice to different generations. Today, the fan club consists of nearly two hundred members coming from different age groups and various occupations. Members range from seven-year-old primary school students to seventy-year-old retired people. "Members come from all walks of life. Some are policemen and some work in the office. Some of the older members may bring their grandchildren to the fan club," said the chairperson.

Thanks to the effort of the fan club to organize various memorial activities to perpetuate Teresa's voice, new members kept on joining the club after her passing in 1995. Unlike the fans of existing popular singers, Teresa's fans could never approach their idol in fan club functions. Joining Teresa's fan club, the newcomers hoped to learn more about the past of Teresa from the incumbent members who had been in direct contact with her before. The chairperson explained:

"It seems strange that so many people join our fan club after she's left. I also feel a little bit surprised. She's gone and they join the club. I can't give them anything. They say they have never seen her. They have never approached her. Now she's gone, they feel as if they lost something. They want to know her stories and join our fan club. They want to listen to us. They want to know how we talk about her in order to find what they've lost."

Learning more about their idol, some of the newcomers further devote themselves to the perpetuation of her memory. For example, Mary, a sixty-year-old woman, and Brenda, a social worker, who joined the fan club after seeing a drama in memory of Teresa in 1998 (in Chinese <漫步人生路>), has assisted in the organization of

memorial activities. Besides, the two fans mentioned in the preceding section, Ah Jack, who has helped to exchange Teresa's information with fans in Mainland China, and Ivy, who maintains a quasi-official fan club website to connect fans from different places and has contributed to the creation of Teresa's wax portrait, became members of the fan club after 1995.

The continuous effort of the fan club to organize memorial various functions has successfully recruited a group of cordial fans who not only appreciate Teresa's voice and stories, but also take a further step to perpetuate Teresa's memory in compliance with the fan club's mission. The recruitment of these dedicated members without the physical or real presence of Teresa provides evidence in support of the effective moralizing role played by the fan club in the perpetuation of her spirit.

### **Support from Teresa Teng Foundation and the Teng Family**

For all these years, the fan club has been engaged in organizing memorial charity functions to practice and perpetuate the values and spirit. Their contribution to society at large has enlisted the support from the renowned Teresa Teng Foundation. For instance, the foundation subsidized a memorial concert mingling song performance with violin music on May 23, 1999 and the <Teresa Teng Memorial Concert 2003> held on August 10, 2003. Besides, the Teng family, appreciating the fan club's faithful devotion to the perpetuation of Teresa and its contribution to society, often show their support for the launching of special fan club events. In 2001, the Teng family sponsored the production of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary fan club publication to the memory of Teresa. Teresa's mother's appreciation of the fan club's contribution is shown in her passage in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication:



“First, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for your support and care for Teresa during all these years. Remember that when I first met you, your faces were as pure and young as my daughter’s. Now, each of you has your own family and career accomplishment. I really feel very happy.

Twenty-five years is by no means a short time, but you are still with each other and foster the growth of the club together. I sincerely wish all of you good health and hope the club will continue to do more charity work in memory of Teresa.”

The fan club has enlisted the continuous support from the Teresa Teng Foundation and the Teng family, demonstrating the effectiveness of its intended moralizing role in the perpetuation of Teresa’s voice and values.

### **Outside Organizations’ Invitations to Organize Memorial Charity Functions**

The frequent invitations received from outside organizations to assist in co-organizing memorial charity functions produce further evidence for the effective moralizing role of the fan club in the perpetuation of Teresa’s memory. Since its establishment in the mid-1970s, the fan club has gathered a lot of information about Teresa and served as a very credible provider of Teresa’s information. Moreover, the fan club has successfully established its reputation through the organization of various memorial charity functions during the past two decades. All these qualities have won the club much trust from many external organizations, which subsequently invite it to assist in the co-organization of public events in memory of Teresa.

“That’s a real headache for us. Today, many people still appreciate Teresa very much and want to organize events in memory of her. Whenever they organize these events, we often ‘give face’. They trust us because we represent the fan club. They invite us to co-operate with them... If we help this organization but not that, that will probably be a problem,” the chairperson said.

Hardly does the fan club turn down these outside invitations. The frequent involvement in the co-organization of public memorial events further enhances its

moralizing role in the perpetuation of Teresa's voice and values.

### **Recognition by Other Fan Clubs**

The effort that the fan club makes to perpetuate Teresa's memory is recognized by fan clubs of Teresa in different places. Chairperson of Teresa's fan club in Japan wrote in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication: "Hong Kong fans' pure love for Teresa has deepened our love and respect for her. We are very happy and proud to have developed friendship with you and learnt from your experiences... We also thank your club for enhancing our understanding of the club's history and hope our friendship will last forever." In addition, chairperson of Teresa's fan club in Taiwan has commented that Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club is very faithful to Teresa and enthusiastic about the perpetuation of her memory in comparison with the "forgetful" fans in Taiwan and acknowledged that it is the most well-established and devoted fan club of Teresa. Apart from recognition, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club has won actual support from other fan clubs of Teresa for the perpetuation of Teresa's memory. Committee members from fan clubs in Taiwan, Singapore and China came to Hong Kong to support the charitable <Teresa Teng Memorial Concert 2003> on August 10. They mainly helped with the preparatory work for the concert.

Recognition has come not only from fan clubs of Teresa in different places, but also fan clubs of local artists in Hong Kong, which have existed concurrently with Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club since the 1970s or 80s. Chairperson of the fan club of Liza Wang (汪明荃) acclaimed the extraordinary "high degree of idolatry" of Teresa's fan club contributing to the perpetuation of Teresa in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary fan club publication:

"Six years has gone since Teresa disappeared all of a sudden. This caused much shock and



agony to her fans. Nevertheless, fans' affection for her did not fade away, nor did their friendship subside. In the days without Teresa, they still bind closely together. Their effort transcends the common chanting practice for supporting an idol and evolves toward a very high degree of idolatry... I strongly believe that the voice of Teresa will perpetuate with the proliferating effort of her fans."

In the same publication, chairperson of the fan club of Pricilla Chan (陳慧嫻) also praised Teresa's fan club as an exemplary fan club, which persists with the perpetuation of Teresa's voice and values through the organization of memorial charity functions:

"The passing of Teresa did not put a full stop to the existence of the fan club. On the contrary, under the leadership of Chairperson Ah Cheung, the fan club has turned the agony into a much more positive and powerful strength --- to actively organize various memorial charity functions to immortalize the voice and values of Teresa.

Since the establishment of our fan club, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club has been the friendliest and most respectable fan club we've ever met. Their faithful dedication to their idol and contribution to charity work serve as a very good model and gain much recognition.

Today the fan club has been operating for 25 years. We would like to congratulate them on this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We also believe that their perseverance and conviction will last endlessly."

The gaining of recognition from all these fan clubs demonstrates that Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club has successfully played its intended moralizing role in the perpetuation of Teresa's voice and values.

### **Trivialization of the Commercializing Role**

Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club lays overwhelming emphasis on the moralizing role in the perpetuation of Teresa's voice and values. This moralizing role is manifested in the objectives and activities of the fan club, as well as the actions and performances of its constituting members. Engrossed in performing the moralizing role, the fan club downplays or trivializes the "profit-making" commercializing role. From the initial establishment mission in principle till the continuous operation in

practice, the commercializing role is always suppressed within the fan club.

### **No Control from External Profit-making Organizations: An Autonomous Entity**

The fan club has been led by a group of voluntary fans as the organizing committee since its establishment in the mid-1970s. Therefore, the fan club is an autonomous self-financed entity independent of control from any external profit-making organizations which might otherwise put pressure on the club to attain certain commercial goals.

### **Non-commercial Objectives: Supporting and Perpetuating Teresa Spiritually**

The fan club was set up to gather a group of fans to support for Teresa. This support was mainly in the subtle form of listening to her songs, talking about her stories and gathering together to celebrate her arrival in Hong Kong. Since her passing in 1995, the fan club has shifted its attention to the perpetuation of her voice and values of love and care through the organization of memorial charity functions. Hence, from the first day of operation till the present moment, the club has insisted on its highly “spiritual” objectives without being bothered by commercial considerations.

### **Non-commercial Fan Club Activities: Private Gatherings and Charity Functions**

In supporting Teresa, the fan club arranged gatherings for its members to meet Teresa on her arrival in Hong Kong. These gatherings were held privately as the main purpose was to provide a chance for the fans to be with their idol who only visited Hong Kong occasionally rather than create popularity momentum in the presence of the media and other audiences to promote her records for commercial purposes. From 1995 onwards, the fan club has focused on organizing memorial charity



functions to perpetuate and practice Teresa's values of love and care. Booths selling Teresa's souvenirs are sometimes set up in the venue of the charity functions. However, money gained the sales of these souvenirs will be donated to the charity organizations concerned instead of bringing any profit to the fan club.

### **Not Serving as a Promotional Tool: Striving to Practice Teresa's values**

Explicit supporting actions commonly found in commercialization-oriented fan clubs for promoting artists were prohibited in Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club. Today, many record or management companies have set up fan clubs and use them as promotional tools to create popularity momentum for the artists. These fan clubs carry out conspicuous supporting actions such as shouting, lifting and waving eye-catching placards, flags and banners, and pushing fences, which, however, have been inhibited in Teresa's fan club. Promotional work for Teresa's record remains the job and responsibility of her record company, and has nothing to do with the fan club. In recent years, Teresa's fan club has concentrated on the effort of perpetuating and practicing Teresa's love and care. It is necessary for the fan club to do some promotion to draw the public's attention to and involve their participation in the memorial charity events. While promoting the charity events, the fan club has never shown signs of creating momentum or exhibiting conspicuous actions. It may use promotion when necessary but never performs as a promotional tool itself. Hence, from the initial support for Teresa to the recent perpetuation of her values, the fan club has intentionally avoided the role of being a promotional tool for momentum creation that is commonly observed in those fan clubs formed by record or management companies.

The promotional role, if any, played by Teresa's fan club concerns the promotion of

perceived positive qualities such as Teresa's voice and values of love and care through the engagement with charity work rather than the promotion of the popularity of the idol to boost the sales of the idol-related commercial products for making profit. This "spiritual" promotion should be differentiated from the "commercial" promotion performed by those recently-fan clubs controlled by record or management companies. Thus, it is much more appropriate to count this spiritual promotion of positive values as the performance of the moralizing role instead.

### **Not intended as an Easy Target of Commercialization: "Discretionary" Buying**

Not only does the fan club trivialize its role as an commercializing agent or a promotional tool, but it also downplays the role in turning itself or its members into an easy target of commercialization for consumption of the idol's products. While those commercialization-oriented fan clubs often summon their members in various promotional events and prompt them to buy the idol-related products through certain measures or procedures, Teresa's fan club has made no effort to encourage its members' consumption at the service of any companies or advertisers. Members have their own discretion to buy Teresa's products or not. As a matter of fact, whoever the idol is, an adoring fan tends to buy and collect the products associated with the idol. Members of Teresa's fan club are no exception. They have bought Teresa's albums, posters, photos, souvenirs, CDs and VCDs, etc as collection and a means of showing support for her.

At the managerial level, the fan club evades the commercializing role as a target of commercialization for any companies and does nothing to increase its members' consumption for any products. At the operational level, fan club members cannot resist purchasing Teresa's products; this inevitable consumption is not uncommon at



all in any idolatrous relationships. In other words, the commercializing role in being a target of commercialization is performed by individual members but such a performance is so prevalent in the fan culture as a whole that it should not be interpreted as a contradiction to or negation of the fan club's intention or effort to suppress the commercializing role.

The deliberate trivialization and suppression of the commercializing role both as an agent of commercialization for promotion and as a target of commercialization for product consumption are evidenced in the non-profit making or non-commercial nature, objectives and fan club activities. In a few sentences, the chairperson gave a summary account of the operation of the fan club, which is devoid of any commercializing functions:

"We run the fan club to perpetuate Teresa's voice and values, but not for the sake of money. It is a non-profit making organization and we can't make money. For some functions like those charity concerts, we donate the money raised to charitable organizations such as Po Leung Kuk after all the necessary expenditures are deducted. We donate all the remaining money. Nothing will be left with the club," stated the fan club chairperson.

## **Chapter Summary**

To sum up, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club exemplifies how a moralization-oriented fan club performs an extremely effective moralizing role in practicing and perpetuating the idol's values, principles and spirit with the support and cooperation of its members sharing the same vision.

A moralization-oriented fan club operates in accordance with certain perceived positive values, principles and qualities held by the idol and the members. In the case of Hong Kong Teresa Teng fan club, Teresa's emphasis on love, care and charity

as manifested in her songs, voice and behaviors are those positive values that the fan club has incorporated into its operation. The organizing committee arranged gatherings for fan club members to support Teresa and appreciate her songs, and involved their participation in charity events. Since Teresa's passing in 1995, the organizing committee has shifted its attention to the perpetuation of Teresa's voice and values beyond the club to the society. The fan club has organized public memorial charity events to raise money for the needy. In fact, these memorial charity events have significance both within and beyond the fan club. Through the engagement in the charity events, the fan club not only practices Teresa's values of love and care but also tries to perpetuate these values to the society.

The fan club makes every effort to maintain its intended moralizing role in perpetuating Teresa's voice and values through certain measures like remaining self-financed, accepting sponsorship if necessary and co-organizing with outside parties if appropriate. All these measures aim at preserving its autonomy in practicing the moralizing role in the absence of any possible external control.

The perpetuation of Teresa's voice and values serves not only as the chief objective of the fan club, but also as the guiding principle for the actions of individual members. To support the fan club's moralizing role in perpetuating Teresa, members actively participate and assist in the memorial charity events. Some "proactive" fan club members even act on their own initiative to communicate with Teresa's fans in Mainland China and manage a quasi-official website for the club to connect her fans over the world. Above all, a young female member has contributed to the creation and exhibition of Teresa's wax portrait in recognition of her lifetime achievement, which is a milestone in the perpetuation of Teresa's



memory and spirit.

The collaboration between the organizing committee and the members constituting the club has made the moralizing role highly effective. Their concerted effort in the perpetuation of Teresa's memory has drawn many new members to the club, and won recognition and support from various parties.

The highly effective moralizing role in Teresa's fan club suppresses the performance of the commercializing role either as an agent of commercialization or as a target of commercialization. In contrast to those commercialization-oriented fan clubs of under the control of the record or management companies, Teresa's fan club is neither a promotional tool for the idol's popularity nor an easy target for consumption of the idol's products. Commercial values and ideas are always ignored or downplayed in the fan club.

An article that a reporter, Ah To (阿杜), wrote in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary fan club publication is excerpted here to give a concluding remark on the fan club's successful performance of the moralizing role in perpetuating Teresa's values of love and care. Teresa's spirit is perpetuated alongside her fans' unabated affection and unconditional support:

"We often use words like 'deep and lasting love' to describe a lasting relationship between lovers and family members. Now, I would like to use these words to accredit the fans who have been staying with Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club for the past 25 years. They are really honorable and respectable.

They spend energy and money doing charity work. They only have a pure goal: To show their true love for Teresa and her songs. Their love for her is lasting. Teresa's gone for a few years. She and her fans are parted forever and will never have genuine communication. All

the rewards for supporting a popular singer, such as seeing her in fan club gatherings, shaking hands and taking photos with her, will never be given. Despite this, the fan club still makes every effort to take care of Teresa's mother, insists on forming a team to Taiwan to pay tributes to Teresa every year and manages Teresa's house... This pure and innocent love is really very touching."

The previous chapters have accounted for the two contrasting roles, namely the commercializing role and the moralizing role, performed by two local fan clubs respectively in the context of popular culture. Joey Yung International Fans Club, controlled by the artist's management company, focuses its attention on performing the commercializing role at the expense of "moralizing practice", i.e. the practice of spiritual values. In contrast, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club, being an autonomous entity led by a group of voluntary fans, exhibits a distinct moralizing role while downplaying such commercial values and practices as profit making and promotion. Given that fan clubs of Joey Yung and Teresa Teng are placed on the two polar ends of a continuum of the roles performed by a fan club from commercialization to moralization respectively, some fan clubs may be located somewhere between both ends and serving dual purposes. Andy World Club (AWC) Limited is a typical example of such dual-purpose fan clubs performing both the commercializing and moralizing roles.



## **Chapter 6      A Dual-purpose Fan Club:**

### **Andy World Club (AWC) Limited**

Andy World Club (AWC) Limited<sup>32</sup> (in Hong Kong) is found to be a dual-purpose fan club performing both the commercializing and moralizing roles actively in the fandom. This chapter aims to the fan club as an example to illustrate the operation of a “dual-purpose” fan club. AWC was founded by Andy Lau, the idol or object of fandom, himself as a subsidiary of his holding company engaged in the entertainment business, Team Work Corporation Limited. Being a company bearing the name of Andy, AWC helps not only in the promotion of the artiste’s popularity and his business, but also in the realization of the artiste’s values and philosophies.

#### **The Organizing Party --- Andy Lau, an Artiste and Business Owner**

Andy World Club (AWC) Limited was founded by Andy Lau in 1988. Andy began his acting career in 1981 when he was recruited by Television Broadcast (TVB) Limited. In 1984, he released his first album and became a singer. To date, he has starred in tens of TV dramas and more than 100 films. He has also released more than 50 records in Cantonese and Mandarin, and performed on stage in more than 180 concert shows around the world.

Andy devotes himself to the entertainment industry both on and behind the stage. He started his own entertainment business when he formed Teamwork Work Group in 1991. The Group consists of one holding company, Team Work Corporation Limited, and four major subsidiaries, each specializing in different areas: (1).

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<sup>32</sup> AWC Limited has its headquarters in Hong Kong and a regional office in Taiwan.

Teamwork Motion Pictures Limited in movie production and distribution; (2). Topman Global Limited in artiste management; (3) Topman Holdings Limited in the management of andylau.com website for marketing and merchandizing Andy-related products; and (4) Andy World Club (AWC) Limited in the arrangement of fan club activities.

Apart from his performance and engagement in the entertainment industry, Andy is well-known for his charity actions. In 1994, he established Andy Lau Charity Foundation aiming at helping people in need and promoting various youth education services. He has also participated in various fundraising functions organized by local TV and radio stations and other charitable institutions.

Andy has received more than 300 awards or honors for his accomplishments in the singing and acting performances, and contributions to various charity events. He was awarded “the Best Actor” in the Hong Kong Film Awards in 2000 and in the Golden Bauhinia Awards in 2001 for his performance career. Other representative awards are “the Outstanding Young Persons of the World for 2000” given by Junior Chamber International”, and “Outstanding Achiever Award for 2002” by Forbes Asia.

### **Performing Dual Purpose: Both Commercializing and Moralizing Roles**

As a company limited founded and owned by Andy himself, AWC innately operates according to the artiste’s personal values or philosophies and some commercial principles for his business interests. In other words, AWC exhibits both the commercializing and moralizing roles in its operation. It promotes Andy’s popularity for commercial purposes and “actively consumes” his products, and at the



same time, practices the positive values he believes in. In operation, the headquarters have employed full-time staff, including an assistant manager and a supervisor, to deal with fan club-related affairs and arranges fan club functions and gatherings for both local and overseas members<sup>33</sup>. AWC also maintains an official website at <http://www.andyworldclub.com> to give the latest information about Andy and fan club activities to the members.

Most of the AWC-hosted functions are “moralizing activities” gathering Andy and his fans together. In these moralizing activities, Andy talks about his personal issues shares his views with his fans. Accordingly, his principles and philosophies can be introduced to the fans who may then put these values into action. These moralizing activities are exclusive to fan club members and most of them are privately held in the absence of the media. Annual regular activities mainly include Andy’s birthday party, the anniversary party, barbeque gathering, camping, day tour gathering, “Dreams Come True Gathering” and bowling tournament. Besides, AWC often takes part in public charity events or fundraising activities where they can practice the values of care and charity, and contribute to society.

Functions hosted by outside organizations are mainly commercial or promotional in nature, including (1) public promotional events regarding Andy’s albums, films (including those featuring Andy and produced or distributed by his Teamwork

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<sup>33</sup> AWC consists of around 4000 members, aged from 1 to 90 years old. They come from different parts of the world, including Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Macau, Canada, the U.S.A., Australia, France, United Kingdom, Germany and Austria. For overseas members, the Hong Kong AWC office either invites them to some local activities or arranges some overseas fan club functions for them in their own places. For example, a “Dreams Come True Gathering” was specially organized for overseas members on December 6, 2002. More than 700 members coming from China, Taiwan, Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the U.S.A., Canada and Austria, etc. attended the gathering. Throughout 2003, at least six overseas fan club gatherings have been held particularly for overseas members in Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, and Japan.

Motion Pictures Limited), commodities sold by Andy; (2) TV / radio station-organized concert shows and music award ceremonies with various performing artistes; (3) Andy's personal concert either held locally or overseas. Members' participation in these public events can gain exposure to the media and the public, enhancing Andy's popularity for his commercial interests.

#### **“Commercialization” in AWC:**

At the managerial level or from the perspective of the organizing party, AWC motivates members to participate in public promotional events to enhance Andy's popularity and targets Andy-related products directly at the members for their consumption. In other words, the fan club carries out commercialization in Andy's fandom by prompting his supporting members to act both as an agent of commercialization to promote Andy's popularity and as a target for commercialization to consume Andy's products. The final goal of commercialization is the generation of profits to the interested parties including Andy and his holding company, Team Work Corporation Limited.

#### *Importance of Popularity Promotion*

Popularity promotion is important to an existing famous star like Andy, not just confined to those new or rising artistes (as illustrated in Chapter 5 on the operation of a commercialization-oriented fan club for promoting an emergent singer). Andy's popularity, though established as early as in the 1980s, still needs to be enhanced and sustained so that he can continue his performance career and business development in the entertainment industry. For his performance career, popularity can help attract public audiences to keep on consuming his films, records and commodities associated with him. The subsequent box-office success, and sales of records and



commodities in turn enhance the cooperation of producers and advertisers with him. Apart from this, popularity can aid his own entertainment business by drawing the public's attention to the films produced or distributed by his Teamwork Motion Pictures Limited, the artistes managed by his Topman Global Limited and products merchandized by his andylau.com. In short, popularity can bring both fame and profit to Andy. That is why Andy has been striving to maintain his popularity for all these years. AWC, as a subsidiary company serving Andy and his holding company, inevitably lends a helping hand in this regard.

*Encouraging and Facilitating Members' Participation in Public Events to Support Andy*

AWC plays a promotional role for Andy in the sense that it encourages its members to participate in public promotional functions and concert shows to support Andy and enhances his popularity. Despite this, AWC or Andy, the founder and owner, has rarely exhibited a prominent intention to use the members as a promotional tool for his popularity or products associated with him. The fan club objective, as stated in the official websites of AWC Limited and its holding company, Team Work Corporation Limited, is simply to devote itself to supporting Andy by providing services for its members, arranging fan club activities and gatherings for the members to approach Andy. Unanimously, this objective is also interpreted and agreed by the club's staff and AWC members as to "gather Andy's fans to support him." Without an intention to promote, AWC does not directly or prominently galvanize its members' strength into a promotional team for the idol. On the contrary, AWC indirectly or subtly encourages and facilitates its members' participation in promotional functions to boost or sustain his popularity. Therefore, it is not so appropriate or accurate to say that AWC or Andy intends to turn the members into a conspicuous promotional tool or commercializing agent as what

those fan clubs controlled by record or management companies have done to mobilize its members to promote the artistes concerned. What AWC has done to promote Andy, however, is implementing certain procedures or measures to encourage the members to support Andy in public promotional events and concert shows. Members' participation and supporting actions in turn help to promote Andy's popularity and his products.

AWC encourages and facilitates its members' participation in public promotional functions and concert shows to enhance Andy's popularity by giving out fast and the latest information about his public performances, making convenient arrangements and providing positive reinforcement for the members.

### ***1. Providing Fast and Latest News about Andy's public performances***

AWC provides the most up-to-date news about the details of Andy's public performances through the "fanzine" on its official website, [andyworldclub.com](http://andyworldclub.com), in order that its members can immediately make the time arrangement and other necessary preparations for their participation in the public promotional events to enhance Andy's popularity. The website announces the details like date, time and venue of most public promotional functions for albums, films and products with Andy as the "spokesman". In this way, members can arrange their time for participation to promote Andy's popularity or products associated with him. For functions with admission quotas or limited seating, AWC often allocates the limited tickets to members on a first-come-first-served basis or by lucky draw. The website informs members about the details of these functions and the procedures for the ticket application if any. Later, AWC may announce the results of application or lucky draw in subsequent website notices. Members find that they cannot get the



tickets may then try other means for entry. For instance, several middle-aged female members made every effort to obtain admission to an outdoor music show held by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) in a playground in Tsing Yi on May 4, 2002 when they learnt that they could not get the tickets from the fan club.

## ***2. Making Special Arrangements Convenient for Members' Participation in Public Events***

AWC makes special, convenient arrangements for members to facilitate their presence in public events to support Andy, thus promoting and enhancing his popularity. When a public performance show is held in a place where transportation is not so convenient, the fan club may make special transport arrangements for its members. For instance, the fan club arranged a coach to take the members to and from the 25<sup>th</sup> RTHK Top Ten Gold Song Award Ceremony held on January 17, 2003 in the Racecourse in Shatin<sup>34</sup> to make it convenient for them to support Andy in the event.

AWC also prompts members to support Andy in overseas promotional functions and concerts by providing convenient package tours for them. In early November, 2003 AWC arranged the <3 days' Taipei Package Tour with You and Andy> for members to participate in a promotional event for Andy's new Mandarin album in Taiwan. Round-trip air tickets, hotel accommodations and the itinerary were all pre-arranged, and the dinner gathering on November 1 was even free of charge. Members just needed to apply to AWC for the participation in the tour. Despite the postponement

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<sup>34</sup> There is no direct means of transport to travel to and from the Shatin Racecourse at the normal time. The sole direct means of transport to the Racecourse is the Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR) but the train stops at the Racecourse station only during the horseracing time. Except the horseracing time, the KCR bypasses the station and passengers who want to go to the Racecourse have to take off at Fo Tan, station next to the Racecourse, and walk through a footbridge for 10 – 15 minutes in order to get to the destination. No shuttle bus or public light bus service was provided for passengers to travel between Fo Tan and the Racecourse.

of the release of the album, the promotional tour took place as scheduled. The news coverage of the fan club dinner gathering in Taipei became a prelude to the subsequent promotion for the album to be released at a delayed date.

Another example can be found in the arrangement of a package tour to <Andy Lau Concert in Malaysia 2004> held in Genting on January 2 and 3. AWC has requested and reserved some concert tickets from the overseas host organization for the members. Interested members just had to submit the completed application forms to the fan club and then it would follow up the necessary arrangements for this Malaysian concert trip. When not providing package tours for overseas concerts, AWC may give the information about the host organizations concerned to the members who can in turn contact the organizations and obtain the concert tickets by themselves, as in the case of the his concert tour in Canada and the U.S.A. in December 2003. All the above arrangements can simplify the preparatory process of attending Andy's overseas public performances, making it easier for the members to support Andy and enhance his popularity outside Hong Kong.

### ***3. Giving Positive Reinforcement for Members' Support in Public Functions***

AWC may provide positive reinforcement to encourage members to take part in public functions to support Andy. An example of reward for members' public participation was the admission to a special gathering with Andy. Members who had attended the three local music award ceremonies held by Metro Showbiz, TVB and RTHK respectively at the very beginning of 2003 were entitled to join a special fan club party on January 21, 2003 to celebrate Andy's success in his singing performance in 2002. This positive reinforcement or reward could be a workable encouragement to members' participation in public events. Expecting possible



special gatherings with Andy, members might try to attend public events as far as possible.

What we see from the above is how AWC motivates its members to participate in public events to enhance Andy's popularity through the provisions of the latest information, convenient arrangements and positive reinforcements. Apart from prompting the members to form a promotional team for Andy's popularity and products, AWC also treats them as a target for commercialization ready for consumption of Andy-related products. Members' consumption can directly contribute to the revenues of his business.

#### *Targeting Andy-related Products at Members for their Consumption*

AWC targets Andy-related products directly at its members. To facilitate members' purchase and consumption of Andy's products, the fan club uses its office as a product display room and outlet, and promotes and sells the products through the official websites of Andy's business, including "andylau.com" and "andyworldclub.com". The websites provide the most up-to-date merchandizing information and easy access to buying Andy's products.

##### ***1. Use of the Fan Club Office as a Product Display Room and Outlet***

The fan club office, a place where AWC members frequently visit, is used as a display room and outlet for Andy-related products. The office is located in an office building in Kwun Tong, occupying one whole floor of the building of around 10,000 square feet. A wide range of Andy-related products such as photos, action figures and souvenirs with Andy's images was displayed in a transparent cabinet at a corner beside the reception counter. Some of these products are exclusively sold at

this office and become very popular with the fan club members. Since March 2002, the credit card payment service has been launched to provide an additional convenient payment method to facilitate members' purchase of the products. In addition, a few computers are placed in this office to make it convenient for the members to get information about Andy and his products from the official websites owned by Andy's Team Work Corporation Limited.

## ***2. Use of Websites for Merchandizing Business***

The official fan club website, [andyworldclub.com](http://andyworldclub.com), frequently informs the members of the latest products associated with Andy and the methods to order these products in advance. The fan club website provides an easy link to [andylau.com](http://andylau.com), a website providing merchandizing information is managed by Topman Holdings Limited, another subsidiary of Team Work Corporation Limited. Above all, AWC members, who are frequent visitors to these websites, form a pool of targeted customers for Andy's products.

The website not only gives the latest news, information and archives about his profile, records, movies, advertisements, dramas, magazine covers, awards, diaries, journals, activities, broadcast episodes, fans-provided news, download areas, vote areas, message board, and chat room, but also promotes a great variety of Andy-related products and souvenirs in the "Shopping Point" section. The products and souvenirs include photos, music and movie VCDs and DVDs, movie action figures, T-shirts, tote bags, key rings, model buses and the like. Just by clicking a few buttons, those interested website viewers can instantly buy these products and souvenirs online. To subscribe SMS messages on Andy's latest news, website members have to pay \$50 or \$120 for one month's or three months' service. A token



system has been introduced for purchase of mobile services such as ring tones, screensavers and graphics related to Andy or his songs. Three choices of buying the tokens are \$50 for 50 tokens, \$100 for 100 tokens and \$270 for 300 tokens. Token users need to spend eight to ten tokens for downloading a ring tone or screensaver related to Andy.

In implementing “commercialization” in the fan club, AWC encourages and facilitates the participation of the members in public events to promote Andy’s popularity and prompts the members to purchase Andy’s products. However, AWC has never shown the intention to turn its members a promotional tool to boost Andy’s popularity. Nor has it commanded the fans to stage enthusiastic actions to create popularity momentum for Andy. At the operational level or from the perspective of the fan club members, their spontaneous, active actions and behaviors in public promotional events in fact manifest themselves as a promotional tool for Andy’s popularity.

### **The Performing Party: AWC Members**

At the operational level, AWC members perform as a promotional tool by actively participating in public events to enhance Andy’s popularity. They search for Andy’s latest public performances and take uniform supporting actions to attract the attention of the media and the public.

#### **Searching for Andy’s latest public performances**

AWC members actively track Andy’s schedule on public performances by frequently visiting the official website which swiftly provides the latest information about Andy. Members can go to those functions held in shopping malls themselves

or apply for tickets if vacancies are limited.

AWC members, who always want to keep up with Andy's latest information, are frequent viewers of the above Andy-owned websites. The once computer-illiterate members have tried to acquire some basic computer knowledge and skills so as to make use of the Internet to get Andy's information. A member, who is around fifty years old, said, "I learnt how to use the computer because of Andy. I want to know the latest news about him."

### **Taking Uniform Supporting Actions to Enhance Andy's Popularity**

Fans' participation, or at least their physical presence, in public events, especially in those large annual music award shows where various singers attend, is a very prominent indicator for an artiste's popularity. In many music shows with various singers as performers, AWC members always overwhelm fan club members of other artistes in number and in uniformity of supporting action. In such a way, Andy's popularity has been sustained and enhanced for years. This lasting popularity is believed to contribute to the success of his career and business.

As compared with the fan club members of other current popular singers, AWC members are older and more mature. In most cases, their active participation is manifested in the uniformity of their supporting action instead of some premeditated excessively enthusiastic acts. Their self-discipline and well-behaved participation have not only gained public recognition for the fan club but also helped to enhance Andy's popularity.

Without the direct or explicit command from the fan club, AWC members often take



the initiative to show their support to enhance Andy's popularity. Their self-perception, self-awareness of their idol's popularity and self-definition of a good AWC members are the motivating forces for their supporting actions behind.

#### *Self-perception of AWC members*

An AWC member has perceived the role of the fan club as promoting Andy's popularity: "How can you find people to attend those promotional events? Of course, to find them in the fan club. If not, where else can you find? Or 'buy the fans'? To create momentum and promote popularity, you should find some fans to help you anyway."

#### *Self-awareness of Andy's popularity*

Members are very aware of their idol's popularity and the related media coverage. This awareness can heighten their enthusiastic action for supporting the idol in public. In the summer of 2002, AWC members were particularly concerned about media's comparison of Andy with F4, a rising performing group coming from Taiwan, in their popularity. A member of AWC hinted that the fan club members would try to actively participate in public functions to support Andy in face of the surging popularity momentum of F4. "I need to go to Grand Century Place tomorrow. Andy will be there for a function concerning Tao Di Green Tea. Jerry of F4 will have a function in Hong Kong tomorrow, too. You know, last time when another member, Zai Zai came to Hong Kong, he was very popular and the fans were very enthusiastic. If Jerry's fans outnumber us this time, the media will surely write about us," she said.

It is the self-awareness of the fan club members, but not the leadership of the fan

club, which always contributes to the sustenance of Andy's popularity. As an AWC member said, "the fan club need not mobilize the fans to create a momentum of popularity, but the fans take the initiative to do so instead."

#### *Self-definition of a "good" AWC member*

In addition, AWC members believe that a good fan should be an active participant who always supports Andy and promotes his popularity in public events: "Those who go to every function to support him and strengthen his popularity momentum are good fans. They show up much earlier to queue up for the autograph functions, lift banners in the TVB Jade Solid Gold music shows, and go to the premiere shows to create a popularity momentum for him."

The intention of active participation of these members is perhaps very pure: to keep their idol's popularity, and there is no evidence that they take a further step to associate promotion for popularity with promotion for business. In practice, however, popularity, manifested in their active participation can act as a workable promotional means for business related to Andy.

#### *Money and time Permitting Active Participation*

Besides the subjective perception or psychological factor, for active participation to be possible, money and time are necessary. Hardly do AWC members have problems with these two crucial objective criteria.

Most AWC members are middle-aged women having a well-off family with all their children grown up. Without any financial or family burdens, while given money and time, these members can actively participate and enjoy themselves in as many



fan club functions as possible. They absolutely have the financial ability to buy the most expensive tickets to many large public music shows and even travel overseas to see Andy's concerts held outside Hong Kong. Temporally, in order to occupy a good seat to see a show held in a shopping arcade, they often get to the venue a couple of hours before the show begins. They can also afford to wait for Andy's arrival at the airport. At times, they even follow Andy to his overseas concert tours.

Besides, quite a large number of members are well-educated working women who also devote their money and time to supporting Andy for his popularity. Beyond working hours, they often gather at the fan club office and make supporting props such as banners, cardboards, and light-bulb boards in large quantities and in a wide variety for their participation in Andy's performance shows. They are willing and able to spend money and time to please their idols and support him for popularity in public events.

AWC's role as a promotional tool or commercializing agent is not intended by the fan club nor by its mother company. Rather, the role is manifested in the active participation of the fan club members in Andy's public performance events. For the second dimension of the commercializing role, namely as a target of commercialization, the fan club relatively plays a more significant part.

### ***Serving as Targeted Customers and Constant Consumers of Andy's products***

AWC members, as frequent visitors to Andy's websites, become one of the vital target groups at which the online promotion of Andy-related products is aimed. However, not only do AWC members constitute a considerable target customer group for Andy's products, but also they act as constant consumers of these products with

actual purchases. With the “buy to support” attitude, they tend to purchase Andy’s CDs and VCDs in larger quantities.

The fact that fans are keen on collecting and buying idol-related products is understandable. However, one important point deserving special attention here with AWC is that the members have the financial ability to consume Andy-related products, some of which may be rather expensive and high-end. A few years ago, Mabell, a jewelry company, designed a set of four pieces of jewelry based on the names of Andy’s songs<sup>35</sup>. The jewelry had to be bought in a whole set, which was priced at a few thousand dollars. Some AWC members each bought a set or two members share one between themselves.

The dual role of AWC as a commercializing agent and a commercializing target has already been illustrated in the previous pages of this chapter. The role as a commercializing agent is manifested in the active participation of AWC members on public occasions for the promotion of Andy’s popularity. On the other hand, the role as a commercializing target is accomplished by the purchase acts of Andy-related products by the club members. In fact, in the operation of Andy World Club, moralization is as prominent as commercialization. The rest of the chapter will shed light on those moralizing aspects of AWC.

### **“Moralization” in AWC:**

The moralizing role of a fan club is interpreted as transforming the idol’s personal

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<sup>35</sup> The four songs on which the jewelry design is based are <My Heart Only Have You (心只有你)>, <Real Eternity (真永遠)>, <You’re My Woman (你是我的女人)> and <God Creates Women (上帝創造女人)>.



principles, beliefs and behaviors into moral values to be incorporated in the club's operation, and adopted and practiced by the fan club members. These values are introduced to the members through the fan club activities and practiced by the members in their fan club participation and / or in their daily life.

In the case of AWC, Andy's values mainly include filial duty, diligence, active learning and personal growth, the Chinese culture, and charity. These values accord with Andy's personal temperament, and are highly supported by the fan club and its members. Moralization is realized, whether implicitly or explicitly, in the organization of fan club functions and the practice of the members in these functions.

### ***1. "Filial duty" in the Fan Club Anniversary Party***

The fan club anniversary, which takes place in June, coincides with the birthday of Andy's father. Andy often takes the chance of the annual anniversary party to celebrate his father's birthday. This filial act, which is performed by Andy and incorporated into the fan club function, is well-recognized by the members. A young AWC member said, "Andy is a role model for the youth. He portrays a very good image. He's filial and brings his parents to attend many functions." Another twenty-year-old member admitted that Andy's filial principle did bring positive impact to her: "After joining the fan club, my relationship with my parents improved much. Perhaps it's Andy's influence. I've tried to consider their feelings and put myself in their shoes." Certainly, those members with "a mother's status" show great appreciation for Andy for his practice of filial duty: "I regard Andy as my own son. I give him a red pocket in the Chinese New Year."

### ***2. "Diligence" in the Award of AWC Scholarship***

Andy is always renowned for his “hardworking” principles. In consonance with the principles, the AWC Scholarship aims to encourage “student” members to study hard for academic achievements. “Excellence Awards” and “Improvement Awards” are given to those who have attained excellent examination results and those who have shown great academic improvement respectively. The scholarship has proved to be an impetus to studying. An AWC member said, “I realize that hard work will be rewarded. I have been studying very hard and my participation in the fan club activities did not hinder my studies.”

### ***3. “Active Learning and Personal Growth” in Taught Courses and Activity Groups***

Throughout the past two decades of his career life, Andy has been trying many things and striving to improve his performances in different aspects. He has now successfully developed into an all-round artiste engaged in acting, singing and, film and music production. In order to make his singing performance much more impressive, he has made every effort to practice his dancing and learn more dancing steps from time to time. To take an example, he has learnt Latin dancing so as to perform much better in his <Summer Fiesta Concert 2001> and in the film <Dance of a Dream (愛君如夢)> (2002). He has also sought to acquire more skills to aid in his acting. For instance, he tried to learn to operate the spears when he played the role of “展超” in <When a Mouse Loves a Cat (當老鼠愛上貓)> (2003).

His principles of active learning and personal growth have been incorporated into the organization of fan club functions for the members. As an AWC member retold what Andy had said in “Dreams Come True” function, the fan club has arranged elementary language courses for the members so as “to foster their interest in learning different languages”. Besides, the fan club invites the members to join



different activity groups where they can simultaneously work for the club and gain more skills to develop themselves. “Performance Group” recruits members who are interested in dancing, singing or acting to perform in some large fan club functions. “Creative Group” welcomes those who would like to help with the designing and making of the bulletin boards and performance props, and the decoration of venues for fan club functions. “Working Group” requires members to assist in the preparation for and the running of fan club functions. Through the involvement in these activity groups, members not only contribute their effort to the accomplishment of the fan club functions, but also acquire some specific skills for their own personal learning and development.

#### ***4. “The Chinese Culture” in Calligraphy Competition***

Andy’s love for China and the Chinese culture is manifested in his songs such as <Chinese People (中國人)> and <Love You for a Thousand Year (愛你一萬年)>, and his interests in Chinese calligraphy and the national art of mask changing. The art of Chinese calligraphy is particularly advocated in the fan club through the organization of calligraphy competitions among the members. These competitions have stimulated members’ interest in calligraphy. An AWC member has said that she learnt calligraphy because of the competitions: “The fan club used to organize calligraphy competitions. I wanted to win more prizes. But now, I think in a different way. No competitions have been held recently and I really like calligraphy now. I keep on learning and practicing, and my calligraphy is getting better and better.

#### ***5. “Charity” in Various Fundraising Functions:***

Andy has been participating in many charity functions to raise funds for various

charitable organizations. He himself also established “Andy Lau Charity Foundation” in 1994, aiming to help people in need and promote a wide range of youth education services. The idea of charity has been passed to AWC members through the operation of the fan club. As seen in the “Andy’s Fanzine” section of “andyworldclub.com” in the traditional Chinese version dated May 29, 2003, in the period from February 8, 2002 to November, 11, 2003 to the fan club disseminated information about four charitable events to the members and invited them to join in. The four charity events were the “Rockport Charity Walk with Andy”<sup>36</sup>, “1:99 Concert”<sup>37</sup>, the “Charity Walk for Hong Kong Kidney Foundation”<sup>38</sup>, the “Charity Haircut for the United Hearts Youth Foundation”<sup>39</sup> and the “Sale of Charity Bags”<sup>40</sup>. The members’ participation in these events by buying the tickets or the souvenirs, finding sponsors to support their action such as their walking or direct donation to the charitable organizations concerned did help to put Andy’s charity thoughts into practice.

### **Concerted Goal between Andy and Fan Club Members: Supporting Andy**

Andy has found his own fan club as a subsidiary of his holding company to support himself by providing services to its fans and arranging fan club functions. Thus, the fan club has to fulfill both a commercial purpose for the holding company and the need to provide fan club activities for its members. These two purposes are actually

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<sup>36</sup> The charity walk, sponsored by Rockport, a sportswear shop, was held on November 15, 2003 to raise money for Andy Lau Charity Foundation.

<sup>37</sup> The concert was hosted by the Hong Kong Performing Artistes’ Guild on May 24, 2003 to raise money for Project Blossom, an education fund for the children of Sars victims. The name of the concert originates from the government’s anti-Sars campaign suggesting the use of 1 part bleach to 99 parts water for disinfection and home cleansing.

<sup>38</sup> The charity walk was held on March 16, 2003 with an aim to raise money for supporting the patients concerned to perform the dialysis.

<sup>39</sup> The charity haircut was held on August 28, 2003 with an aim to raise money for building schools in the hilly regions in Mainland China and subsidizing the tuition of the children there.

<sup>40</sup> The sale was held from February 8 to 28, 2002. The charity bags contained Andy-related products and souvenirs donated by AWC. Money generated from the sale of the bags would be given to the “Andy Lau Charity Foundation” for subsequent charity purposes.



supporting Andy, though in different aspects. At the same time, fan club members join the fan club in order to support Andy. They support Andy in different ways as in their active participation in public functions, frequent consumption of Andy's products and acting according to Andy's principles. In fact, Andy's goal in forming the fan club go in line with members' goal in joining the fan club. These make the performance of the dual purpose --- commercializing and moralizing --- possible.

### **High Effectiveness of the Dual Role**

Like other fan clubs, AWC's participation in promotional activities often receives the attention from the media and news coverage. Recently, a magazine has reported that Sammi Cheng, a female superstar in Hong Kong, tried to use AWC's effort for creating popularity momentum for her. This news coverage has assumed the promotion effect of AWC indeed.

As mentioned before, most of the AWC members have the financial ability to consume Andy-related products in large quantities, sometimes even for those expensive and high-end commodities. Therefore, the members are effective in acting as a target for commercialization for consuming Andy's product.

While Andy tries to introduce his values and "teach" his principles through the fan club-organized functions, the members accept and practice these values and principles by studying hard, maintaining good relationship with their families and participating in charity functions, etc. All these provide evidences that AWC is effectively performing the moralizing role by adopting the idol's values and principles in their daily life.

## Chapter Summary

AWC, as a subsidiary member of Andy's holding company and as a fan club providing services and arranging functions for his fans, performs both the commercializing and moralizing roles actively. The concerted goal between the organizing party, Andy, and the performing party, his fans, contributes to the effective practice of the dual role.

AWC's operation shows that some fan clubs do not perform an explicit role as either commercializing or moralizing, as in the case of the fan clubs of Joey Yung and Teresa Teng illustrated in the previous chapters. On the contrary, there exists a type of fan club performing the dual role at the same time. It follows that the functions of a fan club, as an organization, can be interpreted along a continuum from moralizing to commercializing. The combined findings on the three fan clubs show that a fan club's major role is consistent with the organizational values of the initiating party.



## **Chapter 7      Conclusion and Discussion**

The thesis aims to investigate the functions and roles performed by “artiste-based” fan clubs in Hong Kong from an organizational perspective. Based on the participant observations and in-depth interviews in three local fan clubs, it has revealed the operations and socialization processes in the fan clubs in Hong Kong on a commercialization-moralization continuum of organizations. In general, the three fan clubs studied exemplify three models of organizations along this continuum. The first one, Joey Yung International Fan Club, presents a prominent commercializing role in promoting the artiste for its initiating commercial organization, EEG. The second one, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club, on the other hand, is modeled on a moralizing institution, and in this case, it is devoted to the perpetuation of Teresa’s morality and principles of love and care. Located in-between the two ends of the continuum is Andy World Club which exhibits both the commercializing and moralizing functions for Andy and his holding company. The thesis explains how such types of organizations work and hence demonstrates the impacts of them on the fans. It addresses the important issues of fandom or fan behaviors which are now common social concerns in Hong Kong.

### **Fan club roles determined by organizational values**

The major difference in the roles of Hong Kong fan clubs can be attributed to the different natures and goals of the organizing parties initiating the fan clubs. The roles intended of the fan clubs are in fact affiliated with the goals and values of their respective organizing parties. Joey Yung’s fan club is shown performing as a commercializing agent or promotional tool for Joey and her profit-seeking

management company which value economic gains. In pursuing this commercial goal, the management deliberately established this fan club in 2000 for Joey, a potential pop artiste at that time. The formation of the fan club was in fact a marketing strategy of the company. After gathering the promotional effort of Joey's adoring fans, the company then implemented concrete measures or organizational controls to motivate, lead and command the fans to stage conspicuous supporting actions for promoting Joey. For example, as I have illustrated earlier, it has employed paid-staff specifically to deal with fan club-related affairs, especially at the decision-making level, and appointed a few leaders into the committee to influence other peer and fan club members. It has also arranged a lot of promotional events for members to support Joey in the presence of the general public and the media. Most importantly, it has extended the fan club's promotional effort to the promotion of other EEG-related artistes. This is in consonance with the company's traditional strategy of using existing stars to sell new artistes.

While Joey Yung International Fan Club is subject to the commercial goals and values of its initiating party, Teresa Teng's fan club attaches its operation to the non-economic, spiritual values of Teresa, performing a moralizing function. From its inception in 1976 to Teresa's passing in 1995 and, up till the present moment, the fan club has included Teresa's values of love and care in its day-to-day running. Generally, the club organizes many charity events to advocate and perpetuate these spiritual or moral values. Specifically, it has fought for the creation and exhibition of Teresa's wax portrait, which is a permanent representation of Teresa, and an honorable recognition of her career achievement and lifetime contribution to society. The display of her portrait side-by-side with those of Chinese political leaders such as Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin as well as other contemporary influential



celebrities, is a milestone for the fan club; it now stands on a higher moral ground than many other fan clubs. Besides, the fan club makes every effort to preserve its moralizing role by staying autonomous, especially through self-financing, so as to prevent any external patrons from interfering in the fan club affairs or controlling it.

The dual role played by Andy World Club can be ascribed to the commercial interests and personal values of Andy Lau, the initiating party. It can be regarded as an organization exhibiting characteristics of both moral and commercial types. Established as a subsidiary for supporting Andy and his holding company, on the one hand, the fan club has an intrinsic mission to perform a commercializing role to promote Andy's popularity and products. It encourages and motivates its members to actively participate in public events to support Andy and his popularity through the provision of the most up-to-date news about Andy's track and of convenient arrangements for accessing the events. On the other hand, as a moralizing agent, the fan club incorporates Andy's principles and values into the arrangement of fan club activities and events. For example, AWC scholarships are awarded to members who can practice Andy's principle of diligence and activity groups are organized for members to develop their personal interests. Various charity functions are also provided for members to show their care for and give help to the needy in society.

### **Congruent values between fans and organizations**

The fan club roles intended by the organizing party at the managerial level can never be performed effectively without the collaboration of the fans at the operation level. Fan club members are found to fully devote themselves to adopting the values of the organizing parties and playing the intended roles. Although there is no evidence to suggest that there is a causal relationship between the values of the organizations and

those of the fans, the thesis at least shows that there is a correspondence or congruence of values between the two parties.

The operation of Joey Yung International Fan Club is based on the commercial values of EEG. While the artiste, Joey, is commodified and sold to the general public and potential advertisers, her fan club is used as a selling arm to promote her popularity in the market. Fans recognize the importance of promotion to the maintenance or recovery of Joey's popularity. They are well-informed of their promotional duty and of how they should behave in public events in order to create popularity momentum for Joey. They even believe that their promotional effort can contribute to the surge of Joey's popularity and the successful sales of her records. Besides, based on the economic concept of "exchange value", fans provide promotional services for other EEG artistes in exchange of rewards in terms of money or chances to approach Joey. They do not have the feeling of being "exploited" by EEG, but think that their performance can satisfy both needs of themselves and those of the management company. They tend to "analyze" the "political economy" of the local music industry and do believe that they can identify the needs and concerns of EEG.

The congruence between the organizational values of the initiating parties and the individual values of the participating fan club members is perhaps more obvious in the fans-established Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club. Guided by the belief that Teresa has exceptionally high morality, the fan club organizes various public charity activities which have been well received and supported by the fan club members. Fan club members, sharing these values of love and care, actively participate in the charity activities by contributing both their money and energy. Members not only



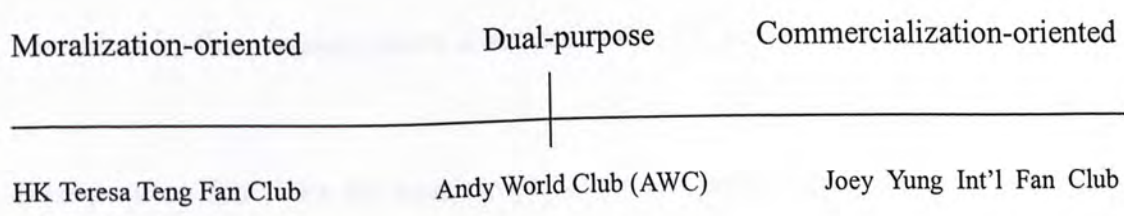
practice Teresa's values, but also take the initiative to perpetuate Teresa's spirit in time and space. In addition, fans' management of a quasi-official website for the fan club and their individual contacts with the counterparts from other places can help perpetuate Teresa's spirit beyond space.

Andy World Club members share both Andy's personal principles and his holding company's commercial values. AWC members actively participate in fan club activities and events "loaded with Andy's philosophies". Members study hard to compete for the AWC Scholarship, enroll in taught courses and activity groups to develop their personal interests and acquire more skills, and take part in various charity functions as participants or donors. Their participation in or support for these events does practice Andy's principles of diligence, active learning and personal development, and care and charity. Above all, his value of filial duty is welcomed by fan club members in different generations. Young members admit that they respect and obey their parents as influenced by Andy while mature members having their own children said that they are captivated by his filial piety and treat Andy as their son. Following the organization's commercial values, AWC members are concerned about Andy's popularity and take the promotion of Andy as their responsibility, especially in face of other competitive singers. By their definition, good fans are those who always frequent the public promotional events to support Andy. In some cases, they follow Andy to overseas promotional events and music shows.

In sum, the congruence between organizational values, fan club roles and fans' performances manifested in the operations of Joey Yung International Fan Club, Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club and Andy World Club along the

commercialization-moralization continuum of organizations, has revealed that fan clubs, operated as organizations, whether affiliated or voluntary, are subject to the values and goals of their respective controlling organizations or organizing parties. This result, in fact, points out that the “organized” collective fandom accepts, shares and performs organizational values, serving organizational interests and achieving organizational goals.

What can be further inferred from the above commercialization-moralization continuum of organizations, suggested by this study, is the distribution of local existing artiste-based fan clubs along the continuum. Results has revealed that the two ends of the continuum locate Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club, which exhibits an exceptionally high moralizing role, and Joey Yung International Fan Club, which displays a very distinct commercializing role respectively; existing between these polar ends is Andy World Club (AWC), which performs both the commercializing role and the moralizing role prominently. The following diagram shows the three distinctive types of fan clubs along the continuum with their respective exemplary examples:



Fan clubs of Teresa Teng, Joey Yung and Andy Lau are exemplary cases of moralization-oriented, commercialization-oriented, and dual-purpose fan clubs respectively along the commercialization-moralization continuum. This continuum, in fact, can also be generalized to other artiste-based fan clubs in Hong Kong.



Fan clubs located left to the mid-point of the continuum (as indicated by the short central vertical line cutting off the horizontal line in the diagram) are regarded as moralization-oriented fan clubs prioritizing the moralizing role over the commercializing role. On the left side of the continuum, fan clubs situated closer to the left end perform more prominent moralizing functions and are more likely to downplay the commercializing role. What can be added to Teresa Teng's fan club to fill in some of the points or positions on the left side of the continuum may be the fan clubs of Bruce Lee (The Bruce Lee Club [Hong Kong]), Liza Wang, Pricilla Chan, Vivien Lai, Amanda Lee and Flora Chan.

Following the case of the left side, fan clubs situated on the right side of the continuum actively perform the commercializing role at the expense of the moralizing one. The closer the fan clubs get to the right end, the more noticeable their commercializing roles become. Fan clubs of some new or emergent singers such as Twins, 3T (Yumiko Cheng, Maggie Lau and Mandy Cheung), Boyz, Alex Fong, Shine, Cookies, Juno Mak, Shawn Yu, Emme Wong may be placed in the neighborhood of Joey Yung's fan club, all of which have been established and controlled by their related record or management companies.

Dual-purpose fan clubs lay equal emphasis on the commercializing and moralizing functions at the same time. Located near Andy World Club (AWC) may be the fan clubs of Kelly Chen and Leon Lai

The study has provided an organizational perspective for examining the characteristics, functions, mechanisms and dynamics of "organized" fandom at both

the managerial and operational levels. It is an alternative or supplementary theoretical approach which tends to investigate fandom as individual or group behaviors, or identity construction among the adoring fans. It probes into the importance of the interplay and compatibility between the organizing party and the participating fans to the effective performance of the fan club roles to realize the organizational values. Besides, the finding that fan club members accept and share the organizational values, and ultimately put them into practice has implications for the possible socialization taking place in fan clubs.

Socialization is the way or process through which individuals learn the socially-accepted beliefs, values and behaviors so as to adapt to and live in society. Given that fan clubs' organizational values, like any corporate culture, including both profit-making and moral motives, are aligned with the commonly-held beliefs within society, fan clubs can be conceived as a channel or an magnifying agent of socialization introducing, teaching and perpetuating conventional social values. The targets are not only teenagers, but also young adults who worship their idols. This socializing role of the fan club can be further explored for the understanding of the formation of youth and adolescent culture.

The theoretical significance of the research lies in the enrichment of both the understanding of fandom and the study of organizations through the integration of the two domains of study by conceptualizing and examining fan clubs as organizations. As the result shows that fans are consciously playing functional or even constructive roles in fulfilling organizational values, whether commercial or spiritual, the current study provides a counter-argument against the commonplace belief that fans, as a randomly gathered crowd or a dysfunctional group, carry out



non-constructive or even destructive actions to blindly support their idols. Not only does the study affirm fans' functional and constructive roles performed within the context of fan organizations, but it also "upgrades" the contribution of fans to the societal level. The stigmatization of fans as pathological, psychologically deficient, socially undesirable, and the subculture-based notion that fans use fandom as a zone of resistance or subversive power to the dominant discourse often denounce the de-stabilizing effect that fans can cause to society. However, the current study points to the opposite and recognizes the possible stabilizing effect of fans supporting the status quo. Fans or fan club members either follow the commercial logic of the capitalist economy on which the Hong Kong society is built or devote themselves to helping the needy in society through charity work, and in some cases, perform these commercializing and moralizing roles at the same time. Such findings can serve as instances in rebuttal of the de-stabilizing effect held by the notions of pathology and resistance mentioned above. These findings also go further beyond the appraisal of fans as sensible and productive (as in the Western literature), and as culturally-lauded and acting as surrogates for the idols (as in the Japanese tradition), to suggest that fans can have practical societal contribution by serving as stabilizing agents working for the security and peace of the society. In sum, the study can add a few words to the existing literature on fandom: Fans can perform functional and constructive roles at the individual, organizational and societal level by serving as commercializing, moralizing, socializing and society-stabilizing agents.

For contribution to the study of organizations, the current study has put forward some new, possible elements for investigation into organizations. The study has taken an unprecedented step to place fan clubs, seemingly negligible units or



marginal groups mainly related to cultural studies, in the frame of organizations for investigation, suggesting that fan clubs can be interesting and inviting sites for studying the dynamics of organizations. The study has demonstrated some of the ways in which fan clubs can be conceptualized as organizations by examining the individual behaviors and actions of fan club members, and the organizational strategies, measures and procedures of fan clubs, and alluding to the relationship of fan clubs with their affiliated organizations, other external institutions and the surrounding environment. Fan culture can also be a research topic in the study of organizational culture. Specifically, the possible socialization process taking place in fan clubs, as indicated by the study, can be very illuminating as socialization have traditionally been regarded as a function or process in such legitimate units as families, schools, work organizations rather than in those “trivial” groups like fan clubs. In sum, the study has opened up a few revealing areas for exploration of fandom in the organizational context.

Besides the alternative organizational view, this study also has its practical commercial significance. For record or management companies, a fan club has demonstrated its function as a cheap and useful tool available for promoting existing and new artistes. Except for those fan clubs which rent their own offices, the normal cost of managing a fan club, which mainly involves the employment of staff and the provision of supporting props, is absolutely inexpensive and affordable by the record or management company. Above all, human resources can be shared among all the affiliated fan clubs under the same company. Fan club staff members are usually responsible for the management of all the affiliated fan clubs for achieving the twofold purpose of better coordination and money saving. The fan club can also be dispatched to assist in the promotion of other artistes if necessary.



Sometimes, the combined forces of the affiliated fan clubs belonging to the same record or management company are seen to successfully create a surging popularity momentum for the affiliated artistes performing in the same event. Besides, a fan club is a reliable promotional tool always available for use. Since most promotional events and music shows take place at the weekend and evening time, young artistes' fan clubs which consist of teenage and young adult members can always go to the venues and provide their promotional effort. This study has shed light on how an entertainment company implements some strategies and measures to lead or motivate the fan club members to perform their promotional duties, giving some hints on the effective use of a fan club as a promotional tool for organizational reference.

As for the policy makers or planners, educationalists may collaborate with the objects of fandom, the artistes, for youth education. Fans, unified by the objects of fandom, the artistes, have been successfully motivated and encouraged by the fan club organizing parties to perform certain actions. Accordingly, fans can be taught and educated through certain educational activities with the artistes as "spokespersons". In addition, some voluntary, self-financed fan clubs are observed to actively organize and take part in public fundraising functions to advocate the values of love, care and charity. The Government's acclaim or recognition of their unified effort in promoting these socially-accredited values may be important to the maintenance of some positive, cohesive strength and the heightening of morale in society, especially in those gloomy periods. The acclaim or recognition can be given in nominative terms for reputation or in the monetary form of subsidies to alleviate the fan clubs' burden of self-financing and to preserve its autonomy in the perpetuation of positive values against possible commercial controls.

## Discussion: Fandom and Social Values

Given that fan club's organizational values are aligned with or affected by those of the surrounding cultural and social environment, fans' actions in the organized fandom may reflect the dominant values and beliefs within society. From the study, I have discovered that fan clubs established earlier, including Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club and Andy World Club, perform a prominent moralizing role in upholding and practicing their idols' personal values and principles like love, care and charity. The fan clubs have been seen to actively participate in public charity events to contribute to society. Recently-formed fan clubs of young or new artistes have often been set up by record or management companies and intended to be "commercialization-oriented". The fan club members usually attend promotional events and music shows, and carry out enthusiastic supporting actions. Examples can be found in the fan clubs of EEG artistes like Joey Yung, Twins, Eason Chan, Yumiko and of other local artistes<sup>41</sup>. The flourishing of commercialization-oriented fan clubs with fans' enthusiastic supporting actions can reflect the increasing importance of commercial values in the highly capitalized society of Hong Kong. Examining the development of fan clubs, taken collectively but not individually, on a commercialization-moralization continuum of organizations, can reflect the change in the relative importance of various social values.

Despite the increasing emphasis on commercial values, certain spiritual values still remain important to maintain the cohesiveness in society, and so do the roles and functions of the "moralization-oriented" fan clubs. In the spring and summer times of 2003, SARS broke out in Hong Kong. Hong Kong Teresa Teng Fan Club used Teresa's voice and songs to disseminate the message of being persistent and positive

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<sup>41</sup> These local artistes or groups include Cookies, Juno Mak, Shawn Yu, Emme Wong and Shine.



in fighting the disease when it promoted the charity drama about Teresa. Besides, Andy led his fan club's members to perform in anti-SARS footage to increase the morale in society. The co-existence of fan clubs with different functional roles simply alludes to the importance of accepting different social values and views to the well-beings of society and the people there.

To most adults, or even scholars, fan clubs are not worth studying. However, I do think that fan clubs are the epitome of our society, and equally deserve attention. To observe how a fan club evolves and how values of a fan club are articulated are equivalent to studying any societal changes, values and conditions. Rather than adopting a grand and seemingly socially significant approach to studying any big and formal social organizations, I think the socialization in fan clubs that I describe is at least concrete and substantial, and the results seem valid, strong and powerful. As a last note, I want to suggest that fan clubs are only a small piece of the Hong Kong popular culture, and the examination of the rest of it is potentially more revealing for the coming generations.

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